

Discovered in a Livejournal

presents

Dialj Bound I:



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*A fandom collection in celebration of International Talk Like A Pirate Day
19 September 2006*

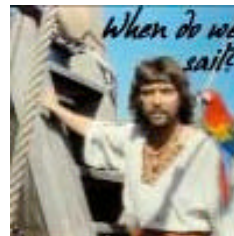
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Dialj B ound I: Discovered On A Gangplank

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Un-E ditorial...

The official bit:

Discovered In A Livejournal is an internet livejournal community dedicated to encouraging new stories, art and other creations revolving around Bodie, Doyle, and the CI5 universe otherwise known as London Weekend Television's *The Professionals* series.

The livejournal community is found at <http://community.livejournal.com/discoveredinalj/> and the content of this zine was originally posted for the Discovered On A Gangplank Challenge, inspired by International Talk Like A Pirate Day 2006.

Content on both the livejournal community itself, and in this zine, is offered by the authors and artists absolutely free of charge, and is meant to be shared in that spirit amongst members of The Professionals fandom, and anyone else interested. No profit is made in any way by the creators of, or the contributors to this zine. Please respect this spirit of fandom, and pass this zine to others without requesting payment.

This is also a "slash" zine, which means that it depicts relationships, often explicitly, between members of the same sex – in this case generally homoerotic relationships. This zine should not be distributed to anyone under the legal age for reading such material in their home country.

But otherwise:

I've always been someone who likes to curl up in bed with her books – or nowadays her Prosfic – and so I've always merrily printed out stories and bound them together, and we know a lot of other people like to do that to. So when we began Discovered In A Livejournal it was always a thought that maybe we could bind challenge contributions together, so that readers could print them off as their own zine if they had a mind too. Or at least so that I could. But we decided to wait and find out whether we actually *had* any contributions to bind together...

Of course it turned out, beautifully, that we did – and so *Dialj Bound* has been born. The plan is that there will be an issue for each challenge, available via the livejournal, for your hard-copy reading pleasure. Feel free to feedback, request hardcopies or otherwise see what is going on at [discoveredinalj livejournal community!](http://discoveredinalj.livejournal.com/)

All of the stories are exactly as they appeared online, they've not been edited any further than the author and their personal betas chose to do so. If you do enjoy a story, authors will always receive feedback through the livejournal post – and likely be very happy about it.

So without any further ado:

Yaaarrhh, me hearties!
And enjoy.

Jenny and Josey
<http://community.livejournal.com/discoveredinalj/>

~splash~

The Pirate of Penzance

by Callisto

A sleepy eye opened when Doyle rolled over and found empty space instead of Bodie. He snuffled back into the pillow when he remembered. His partner wouldn't be back for a good few hours because the man had taken it into his head to go for an early morning dive. In Cornish waters. In late September.

oOo

“Murph’s bust his leg up good and proper. He’s in a cast from hip to toe and . . . What?”

“Well, I know he’s annoying at times, but isn’t this a bit cold, mate? Even for you? You *do* know you’re grinning from ear to ear?”

By way of explanation, Bodie produced a set of keys with a flourish. “Da-naa.”

Tired as he was, Doyle caught his partner’s glee and found himself softening, though as yet he had no idea why.

“You,” Bodie stepped in closer, aware that they were alone in the squad room, “and me, and four days off,” Doyle’s breath caught at that, “and a holiday cottage in Cornwall to grope around in.” He lowered his voice. “How does that grab you, sunshine?”

Doyle took a steadying breath, exhaustion and Bodie’s sudden nearness making their mark. “Oh, it grabs me, Bodie. Believe me, it grabs me.”

“Right, c’mon then.” All practical now, Bodie wrapped a take charge hand round his partner’s shoulders and began steering him towards the door. “Our leave started ten minutes ago and I for one do not intend to spend a single unnecessary minute of it hanging about here.” He turned at the door as he went through it first. “And Murph’s friend’s a diving nut, so . . .”

Bodie and diving. It was something Bodie had always been casual about. A skill the SAS had taught him, together with abseiling knots, ten ways to kill a man using your thumbs (Doyle still wasn’t convinced about that one), bird whistles and bomb disposal. In other words, part and parcel of those still waters of his professional past.

And poor Murph. Due a week’s leave, he had been given the keys and the go ahead to ‘help himself’ to any and all diving equipment in the cottage of a friend. With a faint cry of “not bloody likely” it all became redundant after he had managed to break his leg careering off a scaffolding in pursuit of a jittery informant. His girlfriend promptly informed him that she was not going all the way to Cornwall to push him around in a wheelchair, thank you very much, so a thoroughly pissed off Murph handed over the keys to Bodie, who had tried and failed not to gloat. With a “Break anything and I’ll have you!” echoing down the halls of CI5, Bodie had practically skipped into the squad room.

So here Doyle was on day two. Snug and warm in bed while his partner plumbed the murky depths of the Cornish coastline in a wetsuit. *Bloody idiot*. He stretched with randy early morning laziness. *Should be plumbing my depths*. Not that he could complain really. Not since the entire first day had been spent in bed – one pub dinner aside. And all his own fault really.

Doyle had borne the brunt of the op they'd come off, rarely getting more than a couple of hours sleep at a time for close to three days. Despite this, he had refused to doze in the car on the way down, unwilling to give up the anticipation of what lay ahead. And he had watched Bodie indulge him with that air of mock-suffering he did so well and which fooled no one, least of all Doyle. So he gave Bodie the cheery and amenable Ray Doyle as his reward, the one the rest of the world seldom saw. Bodie, in his turn, found a raucous late-night radio show and each had made the most of it.

They arrived just after midnight, whereupon Doyle's battery promptly sputtered and died. When no help was forthcoming with the bags, Bodie went looking and found a comatose lump passed out on the duvet upstairs, boots and all.

"Things I do for love, mate," muttered Bodie, unlacing a second boot and grunting with effort as he wrenched it clear.

There was a muffled pillow noise.

"Ray?" He looked up hopefully. Not even a wiggle. Lying there looking totally fuckable and out fucking cold. Feeling decidedly put upon, Bodie stripped him with reluctant efficiency and manoeuvred the duvet until he was covered. He paused a moment, absorbed by the rhythmic breathing and the smoothing out of tension.

He leant in close and let his fingers brush a curl. "Let you off for now, sunshine, but that's the last time I undress you just to tuck you in." Knowing Doyle wouldn't wake, he kissed a cool temple and went back to the car.

To no one's surprise, Doyle slept a solid twelve hours and woke up to Bodie, breakfasted, dressed and reading next to him on top of the duvet.

"Oh, hello there, nice of you to finally join us Mr Winkle. Was beginning to think you'd gone and died on me, mate."

"Lo Bodie, what you reading?" Husky and indistinct, the timbre of it took Bodie to hard in an exhalation.

"What am I . . . Never you mind what I'm bloody well reading." The book hurtled through the air as he turned and pounced, pinning Doyle where he lay.

"Bodie!"

"What?" Bodie paused with difficulty, a whisper away from the mouth under his. Somehow Doyle got his left hand between the gap and splayed it over his partner's mouth.

“Haven’t brushed me teeth yet, mate. And I’m starvi-” Coherent speech suddenly dissolved into something groan-like as Bodie tongued his palm. Eyes now alight, Doyle’s hand slid away.

“Don’t care,” came the growl, and Bodie ground his lips into his partner’s. He pulled back and smiled. “Taste fine to me.” He leaned in again, charmed to see Doyle’s mouth already parting, his head rising off the pillow a fraction towards him. It was a reflex that, from the first, had always gone straight to his groin. “And I’ll feed you later.” Whispered into the mouth under him, it was the last thing either said for quite a while.

oOo

Doyle blinked at the memory and debated breakfast. Should really make the most of being awake and Bodie-less this early and do a little sketching. The views from the small garden were spectacular and he knew he would feel himself truly on holiday to try. About time he actually moved his arse out of their pit of a bed anyway. He eyed his morning erection with a rueful smile. If he recalled correctly, the ‘while’ of yesterday had ended up being four lust fuelled hours of slipping, sliding and napping between the sheets until the unthinkable happened. He had called a halt because of hunger and Bodie – *Bodie*– had told him there was more to life than food.

One home-cooked roast dinner later in a tiny pub, with all the country trimmings, and Doyle was not convinced. The only others in the pub at the time were the local diving enthusiasts, a small group of about six. They were planning a dive for the following morning –“Middle of the bleedin’ night, more like,” was Doyle’s badly received contribution – and Mr Bodie was welcome to join, if he had his own equipment.

Apparently Mr Bodie did. One look in the garage on the way home and the gleam in his partner’s eye told Doyle he’d be breakfasting alone. Which was fine, but he just didn’t get the attraction.

“I dunno, it all weighs a ton and seems like a billion pieces of equipment. And for what, eh?” He walked around, watching Bodie pick his way through various bits and pieces, testing and discarding.

“I mean, aside from anything else, this is hardly the Bahamas, is it?” He bent his head down to where Bodie was fiddling with a tank. “It’s Cornwall, Bodie.” He said it loud, fully aware that his partner was ignoring him. “The most exotic thing you’re likely to come back with, mate, is a head cold.”

“Are you quite finished?”

Doyle grinned and appeared to consider it. “Think so.”

Bodie stretched up and waggled something dial-like under Doyle’s nose. “Don’t knock it, sunshine. Lots of shipwrecks in this part of the world, y’know. Might find some buried treasure, and then where would we be?”

“About ten quid better off, probably, after taxes.”

“That does it, then. ‘M keeping it to meself. Not sharing it with the government,” Bodie pointed a finger, “or you. Misery-guts.”

“Oh, be still my broken heart.” But the smile and the palm that reached round to rest itself on Bodie’s backside took the sting right out. And put something else in. He pulled Bodie towards him, loving the way he could refocus this tough ex-merc with something so fleeting. A muscle jump in the jaw, a softening of the eyes, and he was home. Christ, it worked everytime.

“Better get to bed nice’n’early then, if you’re going to be up and at it with the jellyfish.”

Bodie found himself being pulled forward, out of the garage and into the warmth of the cottage.

oOo

An hour later Doyle had to admit defeat. Up, dressed, breakfasted and sketching, the latter was not going to plan. Hoping to catch a nice multicoloured dawn, nature had not co-operated and he’d been given a grey, watery-grey, and splash of white dawn instead. Determined to have a go, he started with a few lines on the sketch pad he had thrown in the boot last minute. But his heart wasn’t really in it, and more worrying than that, he was yawning again. *Gotta be the country air*. He looked at his watch. *Strewth, an hour. Not even.*

He chewed his pencil a moment. *Oh, sod it*. He was on holiday. You were supposed to nap a lot on holiday.

Which was how he came to be sprawled on his side, fully dressed and on top of the duvet with a vaguely salty-scented Bodie pressed against his back some forty minutes later.

He refused to open his eyes, but his chuckle sounded all the way up his spine.

“Thought you were hunting for buried treasure, mate.”

The answer, hot in his ear, was as predictable as the hand expertly unzipping his jeans.

“Oh, I am, sunshine, so why don’t you hold nice and still and let me find it?”

~splash~

B rethren of the Coast
by *R ebelcat*

It wasn't too late.

Lying awake in bed - but not all *that* awake, bloody tired if truth be told - Doyle wondered what he was doing. He should be sleeping, not semi-seriously contemplating getting it off with... with *Bodie*, of all people.

Not that they hadn't done it before. Set a precedent, that did. But it was still at a level where it wasn't too serious. A little fooling around, a little frottage, some mutual wanking off... not exactly something all blokes did together, but certainly something they could ignore. Pretend it didn't mean anything.

Except, *Bodie* wanted more. And Doyle, to his surprise, was half inclined to give it to him.

Somewhere in the house an RT buzzed, but it wasn't Doyle's, so he didn't let himself worry about it. He heard *Bodie* answering, defensive, saying yes he *knew* CI5's switchboard wasn't an answering service...

Then a longer pause.

Bodie said, "No, love, don't patch her through. Tell her I'll get in touch tomorrow."

So, thought Doyle, smirking to himself, *a girlfriend*. Ex-girlfriend, from the sound of it. And *Bodie* was trying to dodge her.

Bodie passed his bedroom door, on the way to the bathroom. He was muttering to himself, an unusual enough event that Doyle woke up a bit more, and tried to listen in.

But all he caught was, "...ships that pass in the night..."

Poetry.

Daft romantic, that was *Bodie*.

He ought to be out there making it up with his bird, not trying to work his way into Doyle's bed. No, what he and *Bodie* had was just matey friendship... the sort where you relied on your mate for your life and sanity, true, but still just... Only Doyle had to stop there, because he honestly didn't know what was "just" about their relationship.

Bodie's words combined with Doyle's half dreaming state to give him a strange mental image of two boats - ocean going, old fashioned warships - vying for the same berth, wooden sides collapsing as they collided, taking out most of the dock with them. Sinking. It wasn't too late. He could still call the whole thing off.

Doyle listened to Bodie mucking around in the bathroom, opening cupboards, no doubt looking for the Vaseline - *though I never said I would, pretty sure I won't* - and felt his exhaustion, a sour feeling mixed with reluctant affection.

Deliberately, Doyle let himself fall asleep.

He half-woke at the sound of the bathroom door, the bottom edge scraping against the warped floorboards. He listened as Bodie's footsteps neared his room, and paused in the doorway. Doyle lay still, his eyes closed. *I'm asleep. Go away. Drive yourself home, call back that girlfriend, leave me alone.* After a moment he felt the bed sink under Bodie's weight. Heard Bodie sigh as he lay down beside him, carefully not touching, but claiming that half of the bed regardless.

The sour feeling in Doyle's gut turned to something sharper. *My life, my house, my bed - what gives him the right...?*

If the third time was lucky, then this campaign needed to stop right here and now. Bodie might have broadsided Doyle's ship once and it was undeniable that Doyle had been the one who shanghaied him the second time, but there wasn't going to be a third time. Absolutely not.

Because a third time might lead to the ships docking together permanently and Doyle knew he couldn't cope with that. The distance they had between them was perfect. Mates. Close, but not so close that Doyle couldn't still pull up anchor when he needed to.

He thought about throwing Bodie out, out of his bed, out of his house... but inertia had him in its grip. And really, it wasn't so bad having Bodie there, though certainly he shouldn't be encouraged. *Just this once...* Doyle fell asleep, still trying to sort out what to do about the problem that was Bodie.

o0o

Bodie heard the change in Ray's breathing, the slight lengthening and deepening of breath that meant he really was asleep, finally. And there was no chance he'd change his mind and decide to welcome Bodie with open arms - or open legs - after all.

Under different circumstances Bodie would have been angry. Aggravating little sod was more trouble than he was worth. After all, it wasn't as if he had any trouble getting laid. Could think of at least three worth calling, right this minute, who'd be perfectly happy for a bit of 'how's your...'

Father.

Bodie swore silently to himself, glaring at the ceiling as if all the answers should be there, somehow, in the writing on the wall - or the cracked and water-stained plaster, as the case may be.

He abruptly rolled over, and closed his eyes. There was only one reason she'd ever call and he didn't care. He'd left it all behind years ago, and he wasn't going to look back now. If the old man thought he was ready to try some kind of reconciliation...

Well, he'd have a nasty surprise on his hands, wouldn't he?

Now *that* was a thought that could warm a bloke on a cold night, when Ray's back was turned against him, and only stubbornness kept him in the same bed.

oOo

They were called into work early the next morning, Doyle grumbling and rubbing the sleep out of his eyes, Bodie with an air of distracted vagueness about him, not quite up to full speed.

Coffee helped, grabbed on the run, followed by a quick stop in the dank little closet they called an office to collect the pertinent reports.

The phone on Bodie's desk rang just as they were leaving. They glanced at each other, weighing the likelihood of it being anything important versus the necessity of getting to Cowley's office in a timely and efficient manner.

Finally with an irritated gesture, Bodie indicated that Doyle should go ahead, and snatched up the receiver. "What?"

As Doyle left, he heard Bodie saying, "How'd you get this number? I said I'd call you!"

Interesting, but there was no time to hang about eavesdropping.

Doyle knocked on the door to Cowley's office. The Controller was alone, going through a stack of papers on his desk.

Cowley's, "Ah, you're finally here," was immediately followed by a sharp glance and, "Where's Bodie?"

"On the phone," said Doyle.

"Humph." Cowley frowned and looked down at the open file in front of him, clearly annoyed at the delay. Doyle braced himself for a lecture, but at that moment they both heard a clatter in the hall.

Bodie burst through the door with a breathless, "Sorry'm'late, sir!"

Cowley glared at him. "Punctuality is the mark of an organized mind. Remember that!"

Bodie straightened, automatically coming to attention. "Yessir, won't happen again, sir."

"Ah, never mind," Cowley waved a forgiving hand at him, before tapping a photo clipped to the file. "Andreas Baader - the Baader-Meinhof gang again..." He stopped and gave Doyle a narrow glance.

Doyle immediately blanked his expression, well aware that he'd been - almost - grinning.

The briefing was short and to the point, and - oddly - Bodie was silent throughout, except for

a few pertinent questions. He was attentive and professional and entirely unlike himself. Given that he had been himself earlier that morning, it had to have something to do with the mysterious phone call. Doyle searched his mind for additional clues, but there were none.

Doyle caught Bodie's elbow outside Cowley's office. "Okay, who's the bird, and when's she due?"

Bodie shook him off. "Don't know what you're talking about."

"The one on the phone. Last night, and this morning!"

"Nothing important. Told her not to call again." Bodie took the stairs at speed, not quite running, but certainly trying to leave Doyle behind.

Doyle was having none of it. He clattered down the steps behind Bodie and cut him off at the landing. "Do I know her?"

"No."

He was smashing himself futilely against the impenetrable rock cliffs that were Bodie.

"Then, who died?"

Astonishingly, a portion of the rock face crumbled.

"My father."

oOo

It was a mistake. Bodie knew it as soon as the words passed his lips. Once a copper, always a copper. Now that Ray was on the scent, he wasn't ever going to let it go.

Bodie trusted him with his life. He trusted him with his body - and would like to do a lot more of that kind of trusting, if Ray could bring himself to come across on any kind of a regular basis. But he wasn't at all sure he wanted to trust Ray with *this*.

It wasn't anything terribly sordid. Or even that uncommon. But it *was* personal.

Every man is an island, and Bodie liked it that way. He had stores of guns, ammo, and basic supplies cached in convenient locations around the city. Cowley knew about some of them, of course, but he didn't know them all. Bodie had several passports in different names stashed in a safety deposit box. Cowley *didn't* know about that one.

At least, Bodie was fairly sure he didn't.

Seventy-five percent of the tales he told about Africa were lies, just so the others would never know which twenty-five percent were true. Bodie allowed friends and lovers in only so far, and guarded the rest of his personal life jealously. Because then, when the inevitable betrayal occurred, they could only take a small piece of him.

And he never talked about his family.

Ignoring Doyle's questions, Bodie stepped around him and continued down the corridor.

oOo

Twelve hours later Doyle was on his stomach in the wet grass, in the dark, directing his team around the far side of a barn. Bodie was out of sight, somewhere on the other side. The terrorists were, presumably, inside.

A door opened, and Doyle whispered a quick warning into his RT.

A figure stepped outside, and lit a cigarette, the small red glow startlingly bright. Doyle slid closer. Mentally, he was counting down the seconds to the co-ordinated attack, his men in position, Bodie's team closing in on the other side.

Then the count reached zero, and Doyle charged silently toward the man in the doorway, hoping to take him down without firing his gun, because every second the ones inside remained unaware was another second to their advantage.

He almost made it. Saw the cigarette falling, a blood-red line cut thorough the shadow even as the shotgun swung up. He rolled forward under the blast, felt a burning sensation on the side of his face just before he collided with his target's knees.

They hit the unlocked door together, tumbling inside. Doyle was vaguely aware of two of his own men entering close behind. One of them vaulted over him.

Doyle grunted as a boot made contact with his ribs. His back slammed hard against the wall. He scrambled to get his footing and launched himself forward, taking his target down. Some well placed blows on his part and the man beneath him went limp. And then it was simply a matter of rolling him over, cuffing him, and leaping to his feet, gun in hand, ready to join the fray...

Except *oh Christ* his eye hurt!

Doyle staggered, suddenly off balance. He clapped his hand over his right eye, feeling the angry sting of abraded flesh on his cheek. That in itself was not a matter for concern, but the fact that he couldn't see out of his right eye – *must have got something in it* - that was a problem.

There was no time to worry about it. Bodie and the others, they were all counting on him to hold up his end. If he didn't...

Someone could end up dead.

Bodie could end up dead.

So it was through the back of the storage room and into the main part of the building, and

hoping against hell that he wouldn't miss and shoot one of their own...

But the agents were good. Top notch. They had the barn secured in five minutes flat. Four in custody, two dead, and Bodie leading the search for one more in the woods. It was all over.

Doyle staggered over to a hay bale and sat down. Tears streamed from his right eye, their salt stinging his raw cheek. He resisted the urge to claw the eyeball right out of its socket, and instead wrapped both hands around the grip of his pistol, holding on tightly.

Cowley stopped by, briefly, slightly concerned, though not to the extent that he would overlook Doyle's report. Doyle found that the sheer ordinariness of the post-mission debriefing helped settle his nerves. He holstered his pistol, and held onto the edge of the bale instead.

Cowley made a pleased noise as he finished. Doyle didn't ask him how his eye looked. He didn't want to remind Cowley that there was no room for one-eyed agents in CI5.

There were footsteps behind him, and Doyle had to turn almost completely around to see that it was his partner.

Without a word, Bodie leaned over to examine his face. Doyle felt his breath, hot against his cheek. He could smell Bodie, as well. Sweat and gun oil. He felt a sudden urge to grab him and just hold on, and he was ashamed to discover that he wanted to cry.

But it wasn't because he was scared. No, it was just a physical reaction to the fact that he had half an ocean pouring out of one eye already. Nothing more than that.

Bodie made a soft clucking noise. "Good thing you never had much in the way of looks to lose."

Doyle growled at him. "Just tell me how bad it is." Because he could hear it from Bodie, even if he couldn't from Cowley.

"Oh," said Bodie, sounding a little too deliberately unconcerned. "Got a nasty powder burn, wouldn't be surprised if you don't end up with a bit of a gunpowder tattoo. Your hair's a tad crisped over your ear. Going to look a fright for a while, sunshine. I'm sorry to say your modelling career may be in jeopardy..."

"My eye, you berk!"

But the ambulance was there then, and Bodie backed off without answering. Doyle was vaguely aware of him hovering, never very far away. His gaze had an almost physical weight, and Doyle found it comforting.

Of course, the doctor's cheerful assessment was even more comforting. Corneal abrasion. It would mend. A bit of salve, a little rest, and he'd be all sorted.

Doyle didn't need to cry with relief. His right eye was doing that all by itself. He settled for beaming happily in Bodie's general direction instead. Bodie returned his grin, and Doyle was

unsettled to realise that what had scared him most wasn't losing his eye, or losing his job. It was the possibility of losing Bodie.

It occurred to him then that it might already be too late to steer clear. Somewhere along the line, without intending to, he'd committed to the course.

oOo

Bloody terrifying is what it was. For a moment there, seeing Ray, his cheek streaked with black soot and glistening red, bleeding, Bodie thought he'd finally met with a catastrophe he couldn't prepare for. All the secret gun stashes or fake passports in the city wouldn't help if Ray was disabled badly enough to take him out of the field.

When Bodie gave Ray his assessment of the damage, he had to fight to keep his voice steady. He counted himself lucky that Ray was too preoccupied to notice.

And then when the doctor said that he was going to be fine... Dizzy with relief, Bodie sagged against the wall and returned Ray's smile.

It occurred to him that he'd failed to take something into account, when he'd been making his disaster preparations. Circumstances had changed. Bodie didn't want to be completely self-contained and sufficient any more.

He wanted Ray by his side.

oOo

There were no celebrity appearances that night - no Andreas Baader in other words - but otherwise the op had resolved successfully.

His eye patched, Doyle walked over to stand next to Bodie, who was watching with detached interest as the terrorists were loaded into the wagons. People were moving with purpose and alacrity all around them, the bomb squad, local cops, reporters... but for a change they were their own island of calm. Their job was done.

It felt somewhat surreal to Doyle, as though everything was playing out like an old movie, flat and colourless. The injection he'd been given had reduced the pain in his eye to a dull itch, but now every time he blinked it felt as if he was dragging a sheet of sandpaper across it.

Cowley having directed the chaos to some semblance of order, was also standing alone, his gaze all-seeing.

Doyle nudged Bodie in the ribs. "Now's a good time to ask."

"Eh?" Bodie gave him a puzzled glance.

"Time off. Leave. You should ask him now, while he's feeling that warm glow of a mission accomplished."

“Why would I do that?”

Now it was Doyle’s turn to be confused. “*Bo-die!* Your father, remember? When’s the funeral?”

“I have no idea.” Bodie tipped his head back slightly, and surveyed the crowd. His voice was still level, as pleasant as if he was discussing the likelihood of more rain. “I wasn’t invited.”

After a moment he glanced over at Doyle, and smirked. “You’d look like a pirate with that eye patch, if you didn’t look even more like a guppy.”

Doyle snapped his mouth closed. Right. Bodie’s father, Bodie’s business. Far be it for him to ask any questions.

oOo

That wasn’t so hard.

And Ray really *did* look like a pirate. Damned sexy, that.

Maybe if he gave him as little as possible, no more than necessary, Ray would get frustrated and go away.

Except not so much the ‘go away’ part. Bodie didn’t want that. Especially not after seeing Ray nearly lose an eye.

Bodie wondered how far he’d have to let Ray in, in order to keep him. Somehow the thought that he might end up with nothing to hold back for himself didn’t scare him nearly as much as it should have.

oOo

It was raining again, lightly, by the time Bodie pulled up in front of Doyle’s flat.

“Right. Ta for the lift, mate.” Doyle was halfway to the door before he realized that Bodie had climbed out of the car as well.

Doyle propped his hands on his hips. “What are you doing?”

“I’m coming in,” said Bodie. He smiled hopefully at Doyle.

“No.” Bodie had been angling for sex last night, and Doyle had no reason to believe he’d given up. If he let Bodie in, there was only one way this could go. And just because he possibly might want it to go that way, didn’t mean that it *should*. Man was more than his gonads.

Bodie’s face fell. “Well, I just thought some company...”

Doyle remained unmoved.

“See, I’ve had a bit of a blow today...” said Bodie, sounding utterly dejected.

Doyle examined him through narrowed eyes. It was almost certainly an act, but there might possibly be some tiny fragment of truth buried beneath. Because no one - not even Bodie, surely - could be entirely unaffected by the death of their own father. Doyle’s relationship with his father was currently on the level of a few words exchanged over the phone twice a year at Christmas and his birthday, but he would still be sorry if he died.

“Fine.” Doyle gave in. “Come up.”

Bodie immediately brightened, confirming Doyle’s suspicions regarding his sincerity.

Once inside, Doyle ignored him and disappeared into the bathroom. He was cold and tired, and his face hurt, but mostly he just didn’t want to deal with Bodie and his clumsy attempts at getting him into bed – at least not before he’d sorted out whether he was at all inclined to say yes. A glance in the mirror confirmed what he’d suspected. By morning he’d have a sizable scab covering most of his right cheek, temple and jaw. *Just lovely.*

Doyle let the bath water run as he peeled off his damp clothes. He appreciated the sting of the hot water on his various bruises and abrasions as he lowered himself into the bath. Leaning back with a sigh, eyes closing, he could almost forget...

The door banged open.

Doyle sat up, sending a tidal wave of water over the edge of the bath. “Hey!”

Bodie stood in the door with a tray in his hands, a napkin folded over his arm. “Will the young master be desiring a spot of tea?” he asked, in his best plummy accent.

“I’m older than you, you berk!” Doyle almost threw the flannel at him before deciding that he’d rather drink the tea than see it end up all over the bathroom floor. “Haven’t you ever heard of knocking?”

“If you’d wanted me to stay out, you’d have locked the door,” said Bodie, unruffled. He sat down on the toilet lid, the tray on his knees, and passed a cup to Doyle. “How’s your eye?”

“Driving me mad,” said Doyle. He reached up under the patch and rubbed a finger under his eye. More tears leaked down.

“Ere! Stop that! You’ll make it worse.”

“Yes, mum.” Doyle looked down into his cup. Bodie didn’t need to know it, but Doyle was glad he was here. Pensively, he wondered what would have happened if he *had* lost his eye and was forced to retire from CI5. Would it really mean losing Bodie, too?

Last night he’d been telling himself that he and Bodie had nothing in common outside the job. Now that same thought made him feel wretchedly lonely.

Bodie took a sip from his cup, apparently oblivious to Doyle's preoccupation with the whys and wherefores of their dubious relationship. Cheerfully, he said, "Wanted to be a pirate, when I was a kid. Eye patch, peg leg, parrot, the whole deal."

"Yeah?" Doyle's descent into self-pity was abruptly halted. It wasn't often Bodie spoke about his past.

"Yeah, well, then it occurred to me that I'd have to lose an eye and a leg to do it. Seemed like a rum deal," said Bodie.

"And the parrot?" asked Doyle, smiling despite himself. Tea in the bath, and cheerful tales - that was more than what you'd expect from a mate, from your partner.

"Got myself one in an African port," Bodie nodded decisively. "Bloody bird damn near took my finger off."

"What did you do with it?"

"Ate it."

Doyle choked, and started coughing, his tea suddenly diverted from its usual path. He felt Bodie take the cup from his hands, and then thump him soundly between the shoulders. Right on one of the bruised bits. "Ow!"

"Delicate little flower, are you?"

Doyle sent a wave of bath water at Bodie, and heard a yelp and a clatter of cups as Bodie tried to duck.

So much for not getting tea on my bathroom floor, he thought unrepentantly. And then a hand landed on top of his head, and Doyle was fighting to avoid being dunked under the water.

He grabbed the waistband of Bodie's trousers and yanked. The sides of the bath were just high enough to catch the back of his knees. With a splash, Bodie landed arse first in the bath, right in Doyle's lap.

Doyle didn't wait. He had the upper hand here, and he meant to keep it. Seizing the collar of Bodie's shirt, he hauled him in close and kissed him hard, mashing his lips against Bodie's until he could feel the outline of his teeth through the skin.

Briefly Bodie thrashed, then he abruptly stopped fighting. His mouth relaxed against Doyle's, opening slightly. Doyle tasted Bodie's lips with his tongue, finding over-sweetened tea and something else as well. A hint of arousal.

Or more than a hint. Pulling away, Doyle found Bodie staring at him with a dazed expression. And judging by the erection tenting his sopping wet trousers...

Doyle ruthlessly suppressed his own burgeoning desire. He had Bodie right where he wanted

him - utterly at his mercy. Without hesitation, he took advantage of the moment. "Your father."

Bodie started, his eyes widening. "What? Here?"

"I want to know. Why aren't you going to the funeral?"

"You can't just... That's not... I'm all wet and cold!" protested Bodie plaintively. He struggled to sit up, but he couldn't get any purchase on the sides of the bath. Doyle threw a leg across his thighs, pinning him, and heard Bodie groan.

"I'll warm you up," said Doyle. He shifted over, until he was straddling Bodie, and heard more water hit the floor. "Start talking."

"I can't believe you're... this is taking 'how's your father' a bit far!" Bodie sounded scandalized, but Doyle noted that he didn't resist as his zipper was pulled down. Instead he made a strangled noise deep in the back of his throat and slid right under the water.

Doyle grabbed him by the back of the collar and hauled him up, spluttering. A small tsunami followed, splashing over the back of the bath. They were face to face now, Bodie on his back with his knees up, and Doyle straddling his waist.

"Yeah well," said Doyle. "I reckon it's only when I'm holding your family jewels hostage that I'll get a straight answer out of you *about* your family." He reached down and gave the items in question a demonstrative squeeze.

Bodie had a reputation for never folding under pressure, for being immune to interrogation. No doubt this was due to the fact that no one had applied quite the right technique before, because this time Bodie folded spectacularly. He began talking as fast as he could. "We don't... we didn't get along. Th'old man was a mean bastard, liked to put the boot in. Mum died. I didn't see any reason to stay. Ran off to sea. Still don't see the point in going back."

"To become a pirate," said Doyle. It was pretty much what he'd expected. Bodie was looking at him pleadingly, so Doyle sat back on his heels and began working Bodie's trousers down. He deserved some reward, for answering the question.

Bodie lifted his hips obligingly. "Yeah, but merchant marines was the best I could do, plus they didn't require me to cut off my leg or lose an eye, and nobody rogered the cabin boy."

"You mean..." Doyle faked an expression of shock. "Cleaning the Captain's head wasn't one of your duties?"

Bodie gave him a disgusted look. "Not in the way you'd like to think. Was a big lad. Did most of the rogering meself - in port," he added, proudly. "Nope, the only bad moment was that fucking parrot."

The trousers hit the floor beside the bath with a soggy thud. "What does parrot taste like anyway?" asked Doyle, starting in on Bodie's shirt buttons.

“Like chicken, what d’you expect?” Bodie’s voice was light and bantering, but there was a look in his eyes, a frightened vulnerability, that betrayed him.

Doyle paused, feeling an uneasy sense of responsibility weighing on him. He was suddenly aware that he had the ability to hurt Bodie deeply, if he chose.

But then Bodie chuckled, and said, “You’d be amazed what I was able to trade the feathers for at the next port.”

“Bodie?”

“Yeah?” Bodie was still looking at him, with that same unsettling expression.

Somewhere in the back of his mind, the small voice of Doyle’s common sense was still trying to remind him of what a terrible idea this was.

He squashed that voice ruthlessly.

Grinning into Bodie’s glazed eyes, he said, “Avast ye matey, prepare to be boarded.”

oOo

Bodie was in heaven. And apparently heaven came with all the latest mod cons, including hot and cold running Ray.

It was the eye patch that clinched it. Christ, but Ray could have stepped out of an old swashbuckling movie with that patch, and that mop of curls, and the scowl didn’t hurt at all. Right in character it was.

Bodie wondered what Ray would think if he confessed that he hadn’t so much ever wanted to *be* a pirate, as he’d wanted to fuck one. Too early an exposure to Douglas Fairbanks films when he was an impressionable lad. Ruffled shirts and tight trousers, and everyone swinging their swords about...

So it was understandable that when Ray had taken to his bath, Bodie simply had to come up with an excuse to follow him in and get an eyeful.

Eyeful.

Oh hell. Ray was getting bathwater everywhere, and while it was very nice...

What’s he after now? Thought he was going to undo the rest of those buttons, not... Oh.

...very nice indeed...

...it couldn’t be doing his eye any good.

The last thing Ray needed was an infection.

“Right!” Bodie suddenly pushed himself up, bracing his hands on the edge of the bath. “Let’s move.”

“What?” Ray’s head came up, wet tendrils of hair plastered to his cheeks and forehead. The cotton wool padding under his patch looked damp, and served only to strengthen Bodie’s resolve.

“Bed,” said Bodie. As Ray’s countenance began to darken, he hastened to add, “See, the tap’s digging into my back, and...”

Ah, that did it. Ray wouldn’t have moved on his own account, but he’d do it for Bodie. Was enough to make a bloke come over all warm inside. Before he came all over in a different way, of course.

“What are you grinning about?” asked Ray, sharply. He twisted around and looked over the edge of the bath. “Just look at my floor!”

Bodie slid his hands down low on Ray’s hips, finding the sensitive skin on either side of his groin. He flexed his fingers. Ray gasped, and Bodie felt him jerk. “Throw some towels down,” said Bodie. He paused to lick some of the water off Ray’s back, his tongue tracing the sharp contours of his spine. “Worry about it in the morning.”

Yeah, that got Ray out of the bath. A damp towel hit Bodie in the face as he scrambled out after him, grinning and supremely pleased with himself. *Like putty in my hands...*

Well, maybe very crusty, dried up putty. Took a lot of work to get Ray to this point - and there was no guarantee of success - but of course Bodie wasn’t the sort to back down from a challenge.

And, of course, there was still the eye patch. Whatever else happened tonight, that alone was worth the price of admission. Bodie thought about the dress shirts in his closet. If he rounded up a couple of birds, found tickets to... the opera, maybe... He figured he could stand a few hours of caterwauling, if it meant he’d get to see Ray in a ruffled shirt, complete with the patch. And maybe ravish him afterward, birds optional.

“Bo-die!”

“What?”

“You’re rubbing your hands together. What are you planning?” Ray stood - stark naked - in the middle of his bathroom, his hands propped on his hips, surveying the flood.

He gave Bodie a suspicious glare, and then began to chuckle.

“What!” Bodie only liked being laughed at when he’d set up the joke himself.

“Look at you!”

Bodie had been focused on Ray’s rather distracting appearance. He now took a moment to

survey himself. Sodden shirt, open to the waist, socks, no trousers... He made a sudden grab for Ray and pulled him close, feeling the contact in his groin like a jolt of electricity.

“Arrgh! Gerrof! You’re freezing!”

Bodie held on tighter. “Promised you’d warm me up.” Besides, protests aside, he could tell that at least one portion of Ray’s anatomy wasn’t unhappy in the slightest.

Ray snaked a foot between his ankles, but Bodie anticipated that and took a quick step to the side to keep from being dumped on his arse. Except Ray knew him too well, and followed up with a grab at his back collar, yanking his shirt down to his elbows.

Bodie struggled to free himself from the damp, clinging fabric, but Ray was too fast for him. He had just enough time to feel Ray’s hand on the back of his head - *controlling my fall, oh how thoughtful* - before he landed with a splash in the middle of the bathroom floor. His right elbow, still tangled in his shirt, banged hard on the tiled floor, and he yelped.

“Hit your funny bone?” asked Ray, straddling him again.

Bodie looked up into those eyes - *dangerous* - and knew he had to regain control of the situation, fast. Unable to free his arms, he braced his feet against the floor and tried throwing Ray off. Except - *oh god* that brought his not-particularly-discouraged-anyway cock into contact with Ray’s bum, and he felt himself light up all over again.

“Let me up!”

“No,” said Ray, thoughtfully. “I like this. Could get used to it.”

Bodie thrashed some more, feeling his heels skid on the slick tiles, hearing the splash and slap of the water. Somewhere a teacup rolled away, colliding with the wall. Bodie’s arms were trapped beneath him, and he couldn’t get free. He couldn’t get to completion either – because now Ray was sitting across his thighs and Bodie had nothing to rub up against. It was enough to drive a man mad. Finally, with a groan of despair, he stopped fighting. Ray was still regarding him with that slightly detached, speculative look.

“Do you surrender?” asked Ray.

“Eh?” Bodie’s voice was a full register higher than normal.

“Do you surrender? Are you prepared to lower your flag, and raise the Jolly Roger. I’ll have no...” Ray paused a moment before continuing. “...scallywags on my crew.”

Bodie felt another surge in his groin, this time just from sheer joy. *He’s talking like a pirate!* But... “Scallywag?”

“Land lubber,” said Ray, licking his lips.

“Ere! When’ve you been to sea?” Pointlessly, Bodie tried to sit up.

“We’re at sea right now,” said Ray. “In case you haven’t noticed.” Another slight pause, and then he added, fondly, “You scabby old bilge rat.”

Bodie wanted to point out that *he* certainly wasn’t going to be the scabby one, once the burns on Ray’s cheek had a chance to begin mending. But Ray suddenly stood, and Bodie whimpered at the sudden loss of his warmth and weight. He could have freed himself now, but he stayed where he was, in the puddled water, looking up at Ray.

Everything seemed to have taken on an unnatural sharpness in the last few minutes, the rusting pipes under the sink, the cracked tile just behind the toilet, the water trapped in bright droplets in the hair on Ray’s legs, and the taut muscular curve of his bum, tightening as he reached up into the medicine cabinet.

“Lily-livered,” said Ray, dropping back down onto floor beside Bodie. “Yellow bellied.” He scooped a large dollop of Vaseline into his hand. “Grog-swilling...”

Bodie couldn’t help it. He giggled. Then he would have given anything for a free hand to clap over his mouth. Because CI5 agents don’t giggle.

Ray gave him a mock-astonished look, before applying the lube generously to Bodie. “Right then, ye mutinous sea-dog, it’s off to the poop deck with you.”

Bodie lost it. Utterly. Howling with laughter he rolled onto his side, his prick slipping out of Ray’s grasp. But that was okay, because his arms had finally come free from the tangle of his shirt, and he was able to grab one of Ray’s ankles.

Mutiny. In one quick move, their positions were reversed. Ray was on his stomach, and Bodie was on top, his knees on either side of Ray’s hips. Bodie moved, feeling the sweet slide of lubricated skin against the heated crack of Ray’s arse. He leaned close to Ray’s ear and asked, “Who gets to be captain, and who’s first mate?”

Ray pushed up beneath him, glaring back over his shoulder with his one good eye. “Understand this, *mate*. We’re taking turns. This time it’s me, but next time it’s going to be you, and there’ll be no argument. Hear?”

Bodie felt a warning prickle of fear, a lightning charge building in the atmosphere, but then Ray moved his hips and he was suddenly much too far gone to care. “Aye-aye, cap’n,” he gasped, stumbling over the words in his haste.

The bathroom floor was cold, and slippery, and Ray swore at him when he couldn’t find the right angle immediately, but then he pushed himself up off the floor onto his knees and his hips aligned with Bodie’s. Bodie dragged his fingers up the long length of Ray’s muscular thighs and felt him first tighten and then loosen, allowing him further inside. He slid a hand under, and laid his palm flat against Ray’s stomach, and heard him groan, feeling the muscles clench in response.

Bodie traced the flat planes of Ray’s back with his fingernails, encouraged to continue with

each shuddering response in the body beneath him. He pressed a little harder and saw red welts rising up, graffiti to show the world that he'd been here. *Mine*. Ray hissed, then twisted beneath him, arching his back up against Bodie's hand. Bodie grabbed him by the hips and thrust, hard. Ray yelped, the sound more pleasure than pain, and Bodie nearly lost it right there.

Ray was rocking back against him, taking pleasure as much as he was giving it. Bodie reached around to take him in hand, grasping him firmly, finding the sweet spot just beneath, stroking Ray the way he himself had always liked it best. Ray threw his head back with a strangled sound, halfway between a laugh and a sob. And then it was all about the feel of Ray beneath him, and the smell of his body and his hair, wet and sliding, and he was vaguely aware of Ray coming first, just before he tipped over the edge himself.

They collapsed together, spent, against the side of the bath, and the first thing Bodie was aware of was a sense of wonder. All those years of holding back, defending his island fortress, and in the end it turned out that all he really wanted was to throw the gates open wide and invite Ray inside.

I hope he'll stay awhile, thought Bodie, wistfully.

And then he opened his eyes, and the first thing he saw was the raised welts on Ray's back, livid red in the bright electric light.

Under the cascading waves of sensation and emotion, the locks of Bodie's private world shattered. Things he hadn't thought of in years...

He could hear the old man calling him, his voice ugly with rage. And he grinned, despite his terror. Because he'd never find him here. And by morning he'd be too preoccupied with his hangover to remember why he'd been angry.

Bodie struggled to find purchase, trying to regain his emotional footing. He wrapped his arms around Ray from behind, pressing his face into the warm space between Ray's shoulder blades. But it wasn't enough. He couldn't get back. And there were still welts on Ray's back...

He hurt, back and thighs. He couldn't see the marks left by the belt, but he could feel them, tender on his skin. He knew he'd be scrubbing blood out of his shirt by morning. Still he continued to grin, safe in his hiding place, because the other part of his punishment had been the loss of his dinner, but he was smarter than the old man. He'd planned ahead. Hard cheese and stale bread had never tasted more like victory.

Ray squirmed beneath him, uncomfortably. "Here, you can get off now." There was a pause, and then, uncertainly, "Bodie?"

He couldn't let go. He knew Ray had to be finding him heavy. It was just that...

He didn't have the words for what was wrong. A moment ago he'd been on top of the world, but now everything had turned inside out, and backwards.

Ray pushed himself up onto his knees, and Bodie moved with him, until they were leaning back against the side of the bath, together. Bodie felt a deep sigh lift Ray's chest.

"It's going to get cold," Ray said, conversationally. "Well, colder. And eventually, when we don't show up tomorrow, Cowley will dispatch a team, and..."

Bodie was trembling, shaking almost too hard to speak. "He's dead."

"Oh." There were volumes of comprehension written in that one word.

Abruptly, Ray twisted out of Bodie's arms. But before Bodie could panic, before he had a chance to even fully articulate to himself the fear that he'd finally surrendered too much of what was inside, Ray was wrapping the last dry towel around his shoulders and hustling him out of the bathroom.

Bodie felt as if he hardly had time to blink before he found himself installed in Ray's bed, with the blankets piled up around him. Ray shoved a glass into his hand, and Bodie stared down at a generous amount of scotch.

He glanced up and saw that Ray was pouring one for himself.

"Have our own wake, won't we?" said Ray.

Yes, thought Bodie. *Not a bad idea*. He took a large swallow from the glass and felt it burn down his throat, the spreading heat beginning to melt the chill in his bones.

Ray leaned back against the headboard and crossed his ankles, looking into his glass thoughtfully. "Mind telling me who called today?"

"My stepmother." Suddenly embarrassed, Bodie drained his glass and started to kick free of the blankets. "Look Ray, I'm sorry. You've..."

"Oh no, you're not going anywhere." Ray grabbed Bodie's glass, refilled it, and shoved it back into his hand. "I'm too tired and sore to go chasing after you tonight. Start talking."

"I'm not sitting here mourning him, if that's what you think," said Bodie, aggressively.

"From what you said, he was a right bastard."

"I was going to go back, and see him, you know. Always meant to, never got around to it. I wanted to show him..." Bodie trailed off. He took another swallow of scotch.

"Give him a taste of his own medicine?" said Ray, his tone carefully neutral.

“Wouldn’t be much fun, would it? Beating up an old man.” Bodie shook his head. “But the fantasy kept me warm, some nights.” Bodie felt a sudden chill, like a cold breath between his shoulder blades. He suppressed a shiver and abruptly finished his second glass.

Ray took it from him and placed it on the night table, beside his own glass.

“Will I do instead?” he asked.

Bodie squinted at him, deeply puzzled. “Do for what?”

“For keeping you warm, you berk!” Ray shoved him, hard.

Bodie caught himself before he could fall out of bed. *He’s actually offering to do this again?* He beamed fuzzily at Ray, finally feeling the combined effects of alcohol, and exhaustion. “You mean, any time? Always?”

“Well, we could sign an oath in blood...” suggested Ray, and Bodie thought he’d never seen anyone look more piratical.

Finally understanding the true nature of the sea change, Bodie said, “Nah. It’s already been signed. Years ago.”

Then he threw the covers over Ray and pulled him down into the bed. Because there are other things you can do with a pirate besides fuck him.

And Bodie intended to try them all.

~splash~

Notes: “Brethren of the Coast - A self-given title of the Caribbean buccaneers between 1640-1680 who made a pact to discontinue plundering amongst themselves. After 1680, a new generation of pirates appeared, who did not trust each other and the fraternity ended.”

Quote from: <http://homepage.mac.com/crabola/PirateGlossary/Menu22.html> - A Pirate’s Glossary of Terms

Three Bells
by PFL

“Oi.” Bodie kept his voice low but he wanted to attract Doyle’s attention. It was Bodie’s turn with the high-power binoculars, keeping endless track of everything happening, or not happening, on the *Morgan’s Heir*.

Doyle, from the sounds of it, was finished with his dinner. He listened as Doyle repacked the supplies bag, then came up alongside him, leaning in close. “Keep it down.” They could talk on this obbo, but only in quiet voices. He had long ago perfected the art of conversing without looking away from the objective.

“I’m bored.”

“I thought you loved the sea.”

Bodie snorted. “This is not the sea.” It wasn’t much like being on a boat, either, so stable was their mooring.

“It’s a canal that leads to the river that leads to the sea.”

“It’s not the sea.”

“You are demonstrating a lack of imagination, three-seven.” Doyle’s Cowley, Bodie admitted only to himself, was marginally better than his own.

“And where did you get the idea that I love the sea?”

“Ran away to it, didn’t you?” Doyle found a more comfortable spot on the table next to Bodie. They’d locked the table into place and were using it as a seat, their feet up on the bulkhead, giving them an excellent view of the canal and the boat that Cowley was so very interested in.

“I did not. I joined the merchant navy to get out of Liverpool.”

“Yeah, off to see the world.”

“I’d run out of money.”

“Off to seek your fortune, then. Braving the sea.”

“I jumped ship as soon as I could.”

“Free as a bird, seeking—”

“There were no birds. Why do you think I jumped ship?”

“What, all those rumours about shipboard sodomy aren’t true, then?”

Bodie grinned. “No rum, either.”

“So all your romantic dreams were quashed, eh?”

“Something like that.” Bodie frowned as he saw movement on the path behind the *Morgan*.

“You see something?”

“Movement. Yeah, someone’s going aboard. White, balding, medium-build. He looks tough.”

“Got it.” Doyle was keeping the log during Bodie’s watch. Clearly the boat was being used for a rendezvous, just as clearly they had no real idea what they were there for. Cowley had just told them to get in close, without arousing any suspicion, and watch. It had been Doyle’s idea to use Brownie’s boat, getting the man to bring them in, hidden in his extra hold, and leave them in his accustomed spot. No one would think twice about Brownie’s boat anchored where it was. After dark, he and Doyle had emerged from the hold while Brownie went out for the night. They were dressed in black and kept to the shadowy interior of the wheelhouse. They had been at it now for two nights. Bodie hoped it would be their last.

“Ah, the new one doesn’t like birds.”

“And you know this...how?”

“They’re coming off the boat.”

“My turn.” Doyle made a grab for the binoculars.

“Gerroff.” Bodie shoved him away with his shoulder, but Doyle stayed close, as if he could see better just by being next to the binoculars. Bodie felt Doyle’s breath on his cheek.

“Selfish sod. Are they dressed this time?”

Bodie sighed. “Yeah, jackets and everything.”

“Hell of a time to send them out.” Doyle shifted away a few inches, and Bodie found he missed the warmth. The wheelhouse was enclosed, but the breeze found its way in and the temperature was colder on the water.

“I wonder who the prick is?”

“Maybe Cowley knows.”

“Probably.” Bodie could hear the resentment in Doyle’s voice.

“I don’t know why you persist in thinking the Old Man is going to change in that. We’re always going to be in the dark.”

“If not always quite so literally.” Doyle shifted again, leaning back, his shoulder brushing Bodie’s. “Go on, tell me more about this hate-affair with the sea.”

“I didn’t hate it, it just didn’t suit.”

“What were you looking for?”

Bodie shrugged. “A way out.” Doyle was quiet and Bodie found himself continuing. “Maybe I had read too many books on the sea.”

“Fancied yourself as Nelson?”

“More like Drake.”

“Ah, piracy in the name of the crown.”

“Not that far off from what we do now, is it? And another man has gone aboard: white, beefy, looks to be in his fifties.”

Doyle sat up straight to fill in the log. “Got it.” He put the notebook down. Doyle’s leg was resting against Bodie’s and Bodie hoped he wouldn’t move. It was a cold night, dark with no moon, and it seemed he and Doyle were the only real people in the world. All the others were actors under their observation, safely far away. “So you reckon we’re pirates, do you?”

Bodie hesitated, trying to judge from Doyle’s voice how he was taking the off-hand comment. Sometimes Doyle could be touchy about the job. Idealism, Cowley called it; inconvenient was Bodie’s word for it. “Well, we do get away with things others wouldn’t.”

“Cowley made you pay that last speeding ticket.”

“Ah, but you got away with the parking ticket.”

“That was legitimate CI5 business, that was.”

“My point exactly.”

“Not quite the same as capturing the Spanish treasure fleet.”

“Modernisation ruins everything.”

“Yes, you don’t hear of whole ship crews dying of scurvy these days.”

“Distance meant something back then. You could be years at sea, and never an official to interfere with you. Here do you recognise this bloke?” Bodie handed the binoculars to Doyle.

Doyle leaned into Bodie to get the same line of sight. “Thomas. Dewey Thomas. What the hell is he doing down this way? He operates off the west coast.”

“Well, jot it down then.” Bodie took back the binoculars, both relieved and regretful when Doyle moved back to his former position. He had long ago accepted the fact that Doyle radiated sex to him, and he tended to enjoy the buzz it gave him. He had no intention of following the lure—it would be suicide to do that. But he was finding that here in the dark, in their own floating world when his senses were full of Doyle, his body was taking an even stronger interest than usual.

“So it was the freedom that attracted you then—along with the violence, of course.”

“Of course. Yeah, I reckon. Freedom and adventure.”

“No rules.”

“Plenty of rules, mate, but room to go your own way. Even pirates had rules, at least on ship.”

He could hear Doyle’s grin in his reply. “You fancied yourself a captain, didn’t you?”

Bodie smiled but shook his head. “Nah, don’t want the responsibility, do I? A ship ties you down too much, even a pirate ship.”

“So, freedom was what you were after.” Doyle’s leg was pressed against his again, as he reached around for the thermos. “You then went from the merchant navy to the mercs to the army to the SAS to CI5—none of them known for their unregimented, freedom-loving ways. What are you really looking for, Bodie?”

“I’ll tell you when I find it. Here let me have some of that.” He put out a hand and Doyle gave him the cup from the thermos. He took a good sip of almost hot tea. “Ta.”

“Room to go your own way, eh? Cowley might have something to say about that.”

“Depends on which way I go. He won’t object as long as I abide by his rules. I like it that way. I know where I stand in this mob.” And what the hell was in the tea that had him saying any of this? He handed the cup back to Doyle and concentrated on the *Morgan’s Heir*.

Doyle slurped tea beside him, the sound so familiar that he hardly noticed it any more, except in the silence that surrounded them tonight. The canal was quiet, only a few lights shining here and there, slipping out from behind drawn curtains on boats and barges. He wondered where the girls had gone, if they’d had a ride waiting for them in the car park by the canal. He wondered what Doyle would ask him next. Shifting a little, he put an inch of much-needed space between them. Maybe it was time to go on the offensive.

“What about you, then?”

“What about me?”

“Ever fancy yourself a pirate? Could just see you swinging from the ropes, striding the deck.” And he could, too, that was the trouble.

“I wonder about you sometimes.” Doyle set the thermos down beside him, and leaned back on his hands. “Yeah, I reckon I did now and again.”

“Seeking the freedom?”

“Emm, no, not so much that as....” He trailed off, as if pondering.

“Sticking it to the authorities?”

He won a quick laugh from Doyle with that, and smiled himself. “Yeah, maybe.”

“And that’s why you went into the police and then CI5?”

“All right, so neither of our choices make sense on the surface. I needed the discipline. I *can* see myself as a pirate, and I didn’t like what I saw.”

“You fight the pirates, Ray, just like me.”

“Yeah, like good old Harry Morgan over there.” Doyle gestured towards the ship they were watching. “It takes one to hunt one.”

“Or two.”

He could feel Doyle watching him. “Or two.”

Bodie wanted to reach out, to touch him, to try the one thing he didn’t dare attempt. It was probably the very illicitness of it that attracted him so much. His hands tightened on the binoculars. “So what do you do to keep yourself sane within their rules? Where’s the pirate inside you?”

“Ah, well, I could ask the same of you.”

“You first.”

Doyle sat up, his hands resting on his thighs. “Well, I reckon the bike’s part of that.”

“What, that old wreck you’re working on?”

“It’ll be great when it’s done. But all of them, really.”

“When you race them? Gives you a thrill, does it?”

“When I go out at night, yeah. On my own, just me against the road, taking the bike as high as I can make it go.”

“Cowley would not approve.”

“Yeah, but it clears my head.”

“Adrenaline has a way of doing that.” Bodie paused, then: “Take me with you, next time?”

There was a silence beside him, and Bodie found himself holding his breath. “Maybe,” Doyle said.

Bodie breathed again. “I bet it’s a turn-on.”

He was relieved to hear the smile back in Doyle’s voice. “Yeah, it is that.”

“Is this the sort of night you’d go out, then? If we weren’t here?”

“Nah, I want more moonlight than this. And, anyway, I only do it when the urge strikes.”

Bodie smiled. “When you’re not otherwise occupied, you mean.”

“You could say that.” Doyle nudged him with his shoulder. “C’mon, then, what about you?”

“What about me?”

“Where’s your pirate, you daft sod?”

“Nothing much piratical about you, is there? Speeding? Where’s all the pillaging?”

“I’ll pillage you in a moment.”

“Ooh, promises.”

Doyle snickered.

“Keep it down, four-five.”

“Up your arse, three-seven.”

“I thought we’d already established the lack of sodomy.”

“We’re on a boat, it comes naturally, despite what you say. C’mon stop stalling, it’s your turn.”

“Here, take over, will you? I need to take a leak.”

“That’s convenient.” But Doyle took the binoculars and slid over to take Bodie’s place.

When Bodie returned he hesitated in the back of the wheelhouse, looking at Doyle’s back. He could detect nothing specific about the dark form, but he knew it was Doyle, would always know it was Doyle. He yearned to run away as strongly as he yearned to go towards him. Self-preservation against the attraction of danger—a common dilemma for him. Approaching Doyle with what he wanted was almost as dangerous as getting it. He walked forward, and settled again onto the table beside Doyle. “Anything?”

“Not a peep. It’s fortunate for us they’ve left the curtain open. What do you reckon Cowley will make of the three of them meeting?”

“Probably what we’re making of it.”

“But what’s CI5’s angle? Why involve us? Anyone could do this obbo.”

“Maybe it’s punishment. Dead boring, this is.”

“And what else would you be doing now?”

“Ah, *well...*”

“Other than that.”

“Why would I want to? All right, then, sleeping.”

“Dead boring that is, too.”

“Not with my dreams, mate.”

“I might have known. Is that where your pirate comes out, then?”

“What, in me dreams?”

“Yeah, all the pillaging.”

“I thought you didn’t want to hear about that.”

“Have you ever pillaged?”

The question stopped him. “Yeah,” he finally said. “One of the reasons I got out of the mercs.”

Doyle nodded, and didn’t say anything, but he pressed his leg against Bodie’s for a moment.

Maybe it was the dark, maybe it was the silence, maybe it was the understanding. Or, maybe it was inevitable. Regardless, Bodie found himself speaking: “You really want to know?”

“Yeah.”

And Bodie put a hand on Doyle’s stomach, listening as Doyle caught his breath, and then he moved his hand down to Doyle’s cock.

“Illicit pleasure?” Doyle asked, his voice sounding constricted.

“Freedom to go my own way.” Bodie pressed down, feeling the hardness and hearing Doyle’s quick intake of breath.

“You do this often?”

Bodie shook his head, concentrating now on what Doyle was allowing him to do, hardly believing it but taking his chance. “No.” He unbuttoned Doyle’s jeans, and slid the zip down. “Hardly ever. I don’t believe I’m doing it now. Don’t take your eyes off the job.”

“Christ.”

It was insane on so many levels: they were on the job; it was all a fantasy kept safely in his head; this was Doyle, his partner, but once started he didn’t want to stop. So Bodie ignored the voices in his head and concentrated all of his senses on Doyle, on the scent of him, the feel of him, the sound of the disrupted pattern of his breathing. He wished he could watch Doyle’s face, but there wasn’t enough light for that. He wished he could have Doyle’s hands on him—encouraging or pushing away?—but Doyle was hanging on to the binoculars as if to a lifeline. Pushing the jeans down further, he stroked Doyle, encouraging his cock to lengthen and to pulse, taking delight in Doyle’s response.

Hands were never going to be enough, so he eased off the table and down onto the bulkhead cushion, and he bent over Doyle and took him in his mouth. Like magic it was, like the Guy igniting. He *knew* what Doyle was feeling, knew how he was struggling to keep from crying out, knew how he wanted it over and yet never to end. And for once he had Doyle completely helpless, completely his. Whatever came afterwards it was worth it for this, for the moment Doyle came in his mouth.

“Bodie...” One word, and that was all Doyle said, as if he could trust himself with nothing else vocal. But Bodie listened to the hitch in his breath, and felt the thunder of his pulse, and was content.

He patted Doyle, gently, and cleaned him up and put him back together. Leaning back against the bulkhead, he took a moment to gather himself. His need now was uppermost in his mind, and he had no idea what to expect, if to expect—”

“Take these bloody binoculars!” Doyle’s voice was low, but vehement. Bodie reacted before he thought and took the binoculars, letting Doyle manoeuvre him onto the table, hardly realising what was happening before he found Doyle on his knees before him, and Doyle’s hands on him, working his trousers. And then it was Doyle, *Doyle* who was going down on him, whose mouth was surrounding him, accepting him, whose tongue...and Bodie stopped thinking, and had no clue what he was seeing through the binoculars, but he clutched them to his face.

Afterwards, as he sat there more shattered than he should have been, he thought of the op and was relieved to find the meeting continuing across the water, behind the windows of the *Morgan’s Heir*. And now Doyle was putting him back together, copying Bodie nearly exactly, and he wondered how experienced Doyle was, or if he was simply a talented learner. He nearly spoke, but there was something in the quality of Doyle’s silence that kept him quiet. Duty required him to keep his eyes on the *Morgan*, but he wanted to see Doyle, he wanted to kiss him, he wanted to *know*. Bodie kept his eyes riveted on the ship across the canal, but every other sense was trained on Doyle, and it felt as if he couldn’t breathe.

Oh madness to have done this. Freedom didn't mean this to him, didn't allow for the breaking of his own rules so easily. He'd fallen for the mood and the night, an act of impulse that might destroy everything. What had he done? Yet, he couldn't blame it all on the night, on the odd sense of being in their own floating bubble, detached from the normal world. Because despite the insanity of it, he was coming to realise that nothing had felt more right than to pleasure Doyle, and to have Doyle pleasure him.

But Doyle's silence spoke to him, and he felt the cold edge of withdrawal. Pirates took and plundered with no thought to the consequences for the victims. Was that the two of them? Was it just thriving on the lure of the illicit, on the danger of it all? Was there nothing more?

Bodie reached out to Doyle. He wasn't allowed to look at him, couldn't kiss him, but he could touch him, could try to hold on to him. He had to show Doyle that it was more than a blow job, more than a dangerous lark, more than a pirate's impulse. He felt Doyle's shoulder, his hand sliding down Doyle's arm as Doyle moved off the cushion, away from him. And then it was Doyle's hand beneath his and Bodie grabbed hold of it, clamping his fingers around Doyle's.

He felt the tension in the hand beneath his, felt the stiffness in the arm, as if Doyle was about to pull away, and then Doyle stilled, and it seemed the very air was still with him. Slowly, Doyle's hand turned in his, and they met, palm to palm, and Doyle's fingers gathered him close.

Bodie found he could breathe again. And then his brain finally understood what his eyes were trying to tell him: movement on the *Morgan*. "They're leaving."

"Who?" Doyle's voice sounded rough.

"Thomas and the other two men. Bugger, it looks like the *Morgan's* getting ready to pull out."

"That's our cue, then. I'll get the R/T, you gather our stuff." They broke apart and Bodie listened as Doyle put the call in to Cowley, and they received the order to move out. A car would be waiting for them a mile down the street from the canal, and they were to get back to HQ as quickly as possible.

They hurried off the boat, then ran the mile, side by side, finding Anson waiting for them in an old Granada. Bodie slowed Doyle with a touch, stopping just short of the car, turning them a little away from it. He still could make out almost nothing on Doyle's face, and desperately wanted full light.

It was Doyle who broke the silence first. "There's a full moon in two days."

Bodie caught his breath. "Good night for a ride."

"Yeah. For two." Doyle was watching him, and Bodie wondered what he saw, if the lack of light even mattered.

"I think I know now what I'm looking for."

Doyle's head tilted. "Early days."

"Maybe."

"Maybe." And he didn't need the light to know that Doyle was smiling.

Bodie turned his head as the car door opened and Anson, clearly impatient, emerged from the car. "C'mon you dozy bastards. The pirates are getting away!"

"Not all of them," Bodie said. He felt Doyle's hand briefly touch his, and then they were hurrying to the car, and on the chase.

~splash~

D iscovered in a Car
by *T hora Arwin*

"Sorry, no can do."

Doyle stopped what he was doing- *bird* watching out the passenger window- and turned to glare at his partner. "Why not?"

"Got a date."

"Oh yeah?" Doyle snorted. "Who is she then?" Knowing Bodie, it could be almost anyone who had cleavage. "Oi, who is she? That new bird in Records?" he laughed at that too, the girl was ugly as sin.

"Funny. But no."

"Come *on*," Doyle grinned at him. "If you're ditching our Friday nights at Rosie's then she's gotta be something."

"Yeah, something," Bodie said mysteriously, changing lanes.

"And what's that supposed to mean? Do I know her?"

There was a pause. "Yes."

"Yes?"

"Well..." Bodie sighed. "Not really, no."

"So which is it?" Doyle glared at him. "A yes, or a no?"

"Well," Bodie said again. "Both. Kind of. You know... *him*."

For a moment Doyle thought he'd misheard. It had sounded like... "*WHAT?*"

Bodie didn't say anything.

"*Him?*" Doyle couldn't quite grasp that piece of information. "Are you saying... you're saying," his lip curled, "that you're going out with a... *bloke?*"

Bodie nodded curtly.

Chuckling, Doyle said, "Good one, mate, almost had me believing it."

"It's not a joke."

"Sure, Bodie. And I'm the King of Egypt."

"I told you, Doyle, when we met. I'm bi."

"I *know* you told me." He shook his head. "It's just... I dunno. You're really not pulling me leg?"

"No."

"Okay, then."

But it wasn't okay, especially since Bodie wasn't saying anything.

"So I know him," Doyle said after a while.

"Yeah." Bodie's voice was neutral.

"Where?"

"Cricket. You know."

Doyle blinked at him, confused.

"The new lad who's just joined the team, good all-rounder."

"What, *Jeff*?" That ponce?! He was tall and wiry, moved like something out of *Pirates of Penzance*, and had looked more than willing to swash his buckle with Bodie.

Bodie laughed. "No, not Jeff."

"Oh." Doyle calmed a bit. "Who then?"

"Doyle, there're only two new blokes on my cricket team. You bloody-well know who."

"Oh." Fucking hell. And he *did* know. That gorilla-sized Irishman. 'Old pals, Doyle, served together in the army,' and 'Had some good times, Big Derek and me.' Doyle had seen in the changing room how the name had fit. And he hadn't liked Derek, not at all. He certainly didn't want to know what kind of *good times* the two had had.

"I thought you liked him," Bodie said.

"Got a rotten sense of humour, he does."

Bodie grinned. "Army humour, mate."

"And he's not very quick on the uptake, is he?"

"Seems just fine to me."

Yeah, he would, wouldn't he? Fuck, was Bodie *defending* him now? Doyle was going to throw up. "So what are you two doing tonight?"

Bodie just smiled, and Doyle wanted to kill himself. Good one. Didn't mean it quite the way it came out. "We'll have a drink together or something," Bodie said finally. "Rosie's, probably."

"That's our place," Doyle muttered.

"What?"

"Nothing."

"Right."

They were quiet for a while, and then Doyle asked, "So, you two... you're doing it then?"

Bodie's jaw tightened. "Knew you'd ask that, Doyle. So very predictable."

"Yeah," Doyle said, pissed off. "You know me."

"Yeah."

"So are you?"

Bodie shot him a glare. "Sod off, Doyle."

Doyle laughed. "Nice choice of words there, mate."

"Just watch your mouth, okay?"

"Or what?"

Bodie changed lanes again, but didn't say anything.

"Look," Doyle sighed. He was making a right mess of things. "Sorry."

"Of course you are."

"I am!" Doyle sat up in his seat. "I just don't like him."

"Thought it was me that was supposed to like him," Bodie said sarcastically.

"Yeah, look," he rubbed his hand over his mouth. "He's too... too..."

"Too, *what*?"

Yeah, too what, Raymond, old son? Too much of a man? Too butch? Too tall? Too handsome? Fuck.

"Too, what, Doyle? I can't wait to see what you come up with."

"He your type then?" Doyle scoffed.

"Type?"

"Yeah."

"I don't have a type."

"Course you do, everyone does."

"I'm not everyone."

"No," Doyle had to agree, lips twisting wryly. That much was true. "So if you like tall and dark, do you like Murphy then?"

Bodie blinked, then started laughing. "Oh, no."

Doyle smiled, amused despite himself. "Why not?"

"Too tall for me," Bodie said. "Too pretty."

"Ah," Doyle bit his lip. "Definitely not a word I'd associate with our Murph." He tried to grin at Bodie to show he meant well. Bodie rolled his eyes. "What about McCabe?"

"He's a pig."

"Lucas?"

Bodie gave him a look. "Are you trying to be funny?"

"Sorry," Doyle smirked, getting into his stride. "What about Anson?"

Wrinkling his nose, Bodie said, "Smokes like a chimney. Only two brain cells."

"Stuart?"

"Stuart?" Bodie sounded genuinely surprised. "Thought he was after *your* pretty arse."

"What?"

"You didn't notice?"

Doyle gritted his teeth. "Notice *what*?"

"That he's after your pretty arse." Bodie started laughing again, which proved to be dangerous- he narrowly missed the cab in front of them, and Doyle's head smacked against the window.

"Keep your eyes on the road, okay?!" he growled.

"Sorry."

"You bloody-well should be." Doyle rubbed the spot on his forehead. "I dunno why I let you drive my car."

"Cause you like me," Bodie said lightly.

Doyle snorted, but something pulled honesty out of him. "Course I do. You're my mate."

"*Best* mate?" Bodie tried.

"Hmm." Best and only, probably, sad as it was to admit. Oh, Doyle *knew* a lot of people, people he could go out for a drink with, but no one he would say was his friend in the true sense of the word. Not even, really, Jax who was married and rarely seen outside work.

Bodie, on the other hand, Bodie had a lot of pals. From the army, from cricket, all those half-mad used-to-be-a-mercenary-in-Africa types. And he had a lot of mates in CI5 too. Knew things about them in three days that Doyle hadn't found out- or bothered to ask- in three months. No wonder everyone liked Bodie. *He* liked Bodie.

"Aw, so I *am* your best mate," Bodie said, grinning. "Lovely."

Doyle folded his arms over his chest. "Don't abuse it."

"I'm driving your car, aren't I?"

Doyle shoved him playfully. "Sod off."

"Oi, watch it!"

"Yeah, yeah." Doyle laughed and leaned back in his seat, made himself more comfortable. Yeah, he did like Bodie. And Bodie liked him back. "Don't you?"

"You what?" Bodie glanced at him with raised eyebrows. "Try and formulate complete sentences, mate, I'm not telepathic."

Doyle shoved him again. "Makes me *your* best mate."

Bodie shrugged. "Dunno."

"*Ta.*"

Bodie grinned. "Welcome."

He wanted to ask Bodie again, wanted Bodie to admit it, but knew he wouldn't. And Doyle suddenly *needed* to know, needed to know if Bodie cared about him the way *he*, after all, cared.

"You okay? You've gone a bit pale."

"Fine." But he wasn't really. Self-pity wasn't his style, but what else would he have left if he didn't have Bodie's affection? Oh, there were his birds, but that wasn't the same thing, was it? He'd save Bodie's life over theirs any day.

His breath caught in his throat.

"You sure everything's okay?"

"Yeah."

But it wasn't, was it?

Did Cowley know? But if he did, he would have split them up. Agents didn't save their partners over Joe Public. *Fuck*.

"I can pull over if you want," Bodie sounded worried now.

"No, no. Just drive." Doyle wanted to laugh; God, he felt miserable.

The car slowed down and Bodie turned right at the corner.

"Oi, what are you doing?"

"Going to my place, it's closer."

"Yeah, but why?"

"Can't have you driving round half London when you're sick now, can we? You really don't look too good, old son."

Doyle unconsciously scratched at his flawed cheek. "Don't bother, mate, I'm fine. Starting a cold, maybe."

"Uncle Bodie's gonna make you chicken soup then, isn't he?"

"Bodie..." He sighed. "I thought you had a hot date."

"Gonna cancel."

"Why, 'cause your partner's got a *cold*?" Doyle asked, in disbelief.

"Yeah," Bodie said tensely. And Bodie would too, wouldn't he? Stupid idiot. Stupid idiot *cared*.

I do too, mate, I do too.

~splash~

J ust E nough R ope
by S lantedlight

By the time Doyle was finished with his part of the clean-up, the skies had darkened again and the wind picked up. He watched the last of the local coppers pulling away, saw that Mac had finally dragged Lucas into the relative shelter of the ambulance for some judicious bandaging, closed his eyes and let out a long, breath.

Clean up? He'd never been so filthy in all his life, and he knew that as soon as he moved, the grit and grime would scratch its way further into his skin. He imagined it burrowing into his pores, the thick streaks of mud and blood becoming a part of him, a gore that could not be washed away...

A stinging slap of icy rain across his face roused him, the bile sliding back down his throat, the darkness slithering away to wait, he knew, until he was asleep, when it would rampage across his subconscious, twist into his dreams.

Christ, what a life. He shook his head, grimaced against the mud-crusting weight of his hair, and turned towards the welcoming lights of the farmhouse, bone tired and weary.

By the time he'd hiked the width of the field, the rain was a wind-tossed downpour that had actually managed to slick away some of the muck and sludge that had coated him for what felt like days. Now he just felt... slimy. He grimaced. He felt like he was covered in slime, and he felt...

Empty. He felt empty and he didn't know how to fix it.

"Agent 4.5, stop! Right. There."

Mere feet from the glorious golden warmth of the building he froze, lifted his eyes to his assailant.

"Ah c'mon Susie, have a heart."

"Mr Cowley's instructions. None of the team over this threshold..."

"Bodie..."

"... in their field clothes. Get 'em off 4.5."

He considered flirting for barely the second it took him to shiver twice, but there was no heart in him for it, and he wouldn't win anything he tried to start now. Fisher was worse than bloody Cowley half the time... Defiantly holding her gaze he kicked off his trainers, stripped off his jacket, shirt and socks, and then knew with a sinking heart that he'd actually have to sit down on the doorstep to peel away his wet jeans.

Pursing his lips he undid his fly, turned to lower his goose-pimpled body onto the concrete, and found himself sat squarely in front of George Cowley.

"What *are* you doing, 4.5? You'll catch your death, man."

"Obeying instructions, sir," Doyle managed between clenched teeth, "No field clothes in the house."

"In the house, no, but there's a perfectly good laundry set aside for your ablutions, and the owner has very kindly given us permission to use his bathroom." Cowley frowned from under his umbrella, "What on earth you're doing..."

Without waiting to hear the rest, Doyle scrambled to his feet and into the kitchen. *Fucking* Susie... She, of course, was long gone, but he raised a chorus of wolf-whistles and cheers from the other agents reviving with tea and towels around the kitchen table. He waved them away impatiently, and followed Murphy's upturned thumb down a dim hallway to the laundry.

He was losing it, on top of everything else he was losing it. Two weeks ago he wouldn't have fallen for that. But two weeks ago his mind hadn't been wandering like it was now, it wouldn't have betrayed him so obviously. Two weeks ago, he had been in control.

The laundry smelled of sweat and damp and an earthiness that you only found far away from his world, in the countryside. There was one towel left, a rummaged-through stack of spare clothes, and another pile of wet ones, atop of which lay a pair of black corduroys. Bodie.

God, but he wanted Bodie. He knew he shouldn't, he knew that was where everything that had gone so right had gone so wrong, but *god* he wanted Bodie.

Taking the stairs two at a time, his feet heavy even as his rotten, treacherous heart pulled him on, he followed the sounds of streaming water to another door, knocked loudly.

"Just a minute."

"S me," Doyle announced, half a second after he'd entered the room. Steam enwrapped him, hot and close, and he felt his muscles start to loosen.

"Alright mate?" Bodie's voice rose above the shower, sounding tired but cheerful. And why not? They'd got the bastards, all of them, and not an agent lost, right?

"I'll let you know when the hypothermia's worn off." Doyle wanted nothing more than to pull open the curtain and slide into the shower beside him, to feel Bodie's arms a solid band around his chest, to close his eyes and feel Bodie's heartbeat firm and steady against his own.

And to fuck him into next week.

But that was where this had started, and it was no longer enough. He resisted the urge, knowing that Bodie would welcome it, knowing that to Bodie it meant nothing, and leaned back against the sink instead. "You get that crease seen to?"

"Yeah, it's fine." The water switched off and the shower curtain scraped back. Doyle, who'd been staring at the bathmat, already sodden from half a dozen other agents' drippings, found his gaze wandering slowly upwards.

"Oi, Doyle?"

"What?" Doyle's attention snapped to, to find Bodie staring at him, lips twisted in amusement.

"Is that *actually* cow sh-"

"Yeah, yeah, alright," he interrupted hurriedly, feeling anew the tight pull of whatever it was smeared down his cheek and neck, remembering exactly what he must look like. "You done in there then, or are you planning on keeping guard for the rest of the night?"

Bodie reached in to switch the water back on, stepped away from the shower, and began an unsuccessful campaign to clear a patch on the mirror. Someone had thought to bring shaving kit, and for a moment Bodie's deep humming while he lathered up was a serene counterpoint to the streams of water on plastic.

Forget it, take what he could, and get over it, that's what he had to do. That's what Bodie did, day by day, hour by hour, minute by lightly-held minute, right?

Doyle poured shampoo liberally over his head, deliberately closed his mind to anything except sound and the sharp apple smell that enveloped him. He rinsed, shampooed again, and then found himself doing it a third time. He used it to soap himself instead, followed that up with genuine Lifebuoy, and finally, reluctantly, turned off the water and reached for his towel.

And there was Bodie, taking his turn perched against the sink, waiting for him. Bodie's gaze started at his feet, travelled inch by inch up his legs. Doyle felt himself grow hard in an instant, saw the expression on Bodie's face as it happened.

Oh Christ...

"Don't," Bodie said huskily, as Doyle absently clutched the towel in one hand, "I quite fancy you wet... Here, and now, and fast."

The towel dropped to the floor.

Bodie knew, *always* knew exactly what he wanted, and Doyle gave up any thought of resisting this time. He grabbed an arm and pulled Bodie to him, snaked fingers through his short hair, using it to hold him firmly in place as their lips met, their tongues twined – but that was fine, because Bodie was doing the same thing, clamping them together, his hands on Doyle's bum. The heat built between them, centred low and hard, and urgent, and he gave himself up to it, as he had known he would, with a kind of despair.

Bodie's skin was smooth, all the way down from lips, to throat, to chest to stomach... His legs weren't, lightly haired against the palms of Doyle's hands, until you came to his groin where he was lushly, darkly marked. Doyle was on his knees now, having followed a straight line downwards all the way.

He slid his hands up again, from muscled thighs to rounded buttocks, and opened his eyes just briefly. Bodie's cock was tall and proud, inches from his mouth, his lips, and it sang to his senses – he wanted to feel it on his tongue, against his teeth, his throat...

A livid white scar that he'd never noticed before caught his eye, and he dropped his gaze just slightly to the right, brought a finger to trace its brief length, and felt Bodie look down at him to see what the distraction was.

"Bodie! Doyle! Are you still up there?"

Footsteps slammed against wooden stairs. There was a pounding on the door, and a sudden rush of cold air into the room.

"Christ, what the hell are you doing? You've been ages!" Turner eyed Doyle, whose face was half covered in shaving foam, with the knowledgeable eye of one who has seen it all and done it twice.

"Well someone's gotta teach him how to use a real razor," Bodie drawled, relaxed against the radiator which must surely, Doyle thought, be burning a stripe through the skimpy towel he wore. "Can't 'ave him frightening the sheep with his nicks and cuts, can we?" Bodie's hands were clasped, oh so innocently, in front of him.

"Yeah, he's an expert apparently, you should see some of the scars he got when he nearly had a nasty accident shaving..." Doyle heard the twist to his voice, winced inside where no one else could see it, but Bodie caught it anyway, looking at him unfathomably, direct and cool and *knowing*. If Turner put two and two together...

But *Bodie's* voice was light, without thought, without care. "Ey, I'll have you know that was your actual pirates, that was," he retorted, as if it didn't occur to him to pause, to wonder what he'd say if Turner asked which scar, or where it was, or how Doyle had seen it when no one else had.

After all, *he* didn't need to worry, to wonder at the price. *Bodie* just didn't care.

"Pirates?" he chimed in with Turner, "Pull the other one old son, it plays 'Drunken Sailor'."

"True story..." Bodie began.

"Save it for the pub, mate," Turner interrupted, "Cowley's stood us all down until eight Monday morning – reports due at nine. Fancy a quick one?"

Doyle concentrated hard on the sudden sharp pain as the razor drew blood, avoided Bodie's

eyes. *Here and now, and fast.*

"Yeah, why not?" Bodie was saying, "Where you going then? Down the village?"

"Nah – McCabe put an end to that at the local darts." Turner rolled his eyes. "Thought we'd try the next place over. On the left as you go into town, Sailor's Reach... no, Seaman's Reach."

"Yeah alright..." Did Bodie sound slightly strangled? Probably not. Doyle scraped the razor determinedly down his cheek. "Meet you there then?"

"Not unless you're gonna walk the five miles, your car's still short two wheels and a windscreen."

Doyle groaned. The night stretched in front of them, full of other people, full of wanting Bodie, and full now, most of all, of the risk of being *found out*.

"I'll give you a lift," Turner was saying, "If you get a move on. You're wasting good drinking time, you know."

"Alright, keep your hair on," Bodie stepped elegantly into a pair of dark jeans, and Doyle realised with a catch to his breath that he hadn't seen him put on underwear first. He closed his eyes, felt the razor nick another plane of skin, and he knew.

This had to *end*.

Doyle froze, arrested by the simplicity of the thought, the clear lines of it cutting through everything else like a laser through the misted light of the room. In the mirror his face suddenly reflected sharply back at him, Turner and Bodie just blurs swaying in the background.

"So did your boy tell you what Susie did to him then...? Only had him half naked in front of Cowley..."

"Doyle half naked?" Bodie raised an eyebrow at him, "Only half naked, Doyle? I'm disappointed in you..."

Yes. Now he knew what he had to do. It all. Ended. Here.

oOo

The Seaman's Reach was an old wooden building on the cliffs above Dogger Bay, the entrance guarded by a copse of dark pine trees and a short but surprisingly winding driveway. Wind, waves and rain were indistinguishable, the sound dampened by the night to a steady *shushing* and Doyle found himself somehow lulled by it as he followed the other two into the pub. This night would, after all, eventually end, and until then he would spend it drinking with the lads.

Inside the air was blue with smoke, but the fug was warm, dry, and surprisingly hospitable. Doyle joined the table of CI5 agents, pulling up a couple of chairs and glowering at Fisher as she grinned unrepentantly in his direction. A chorus of "Wey-hey"s greeted him, and he rolled his eyes to the ceiling and scowled as good-naturedly as he could manage.

Bodie had gone to get the first round in, and Doyle surveyed the room, his gaze sharp, assessing, as every other agents' had been. Two obvious exits leading straight outside, four other doors, twelve windows. A mixed clientele, mostly harmless looking – a couple of very low-key types, probably doing some light dealing to a known customer base, nothing to concern CI5. And a very, very clear theme to the décor.

"What is this place, anyway?" he asked Murph, who was slumped beside him looking pensive.

"Don't ask me," Murphy roused himself, and turned to examine their surroundings. "Smuggler's delight I should think."

Bodie's delight too probably, Doyle thought, that should make it easier, distract him. The woodwork shone a rich mahogany, there was a fireplace, above which rested shelves of old books, and the walls were covered with ancient and undoubtedly genuine sailing gear: a ship's wheel bizarrely cracked almost in two through the centre, various brass instruments hanging loosely and inviting touch, and an actual figurehead, a bare-breasted lovely with sweeping hair, her hands resting where lush thighs should have begun, jutting out over the bar. In fact, as Doyle watched, Bodie stepped back, balancing three pints, and looked up appreciatively.

That's it Bodie, go back to your girls, go back to their charms, their wiles, their pull. *Leave me alone.*

A dark, foam-topped glass was placed in front of him, and Bodie squeezed around Murphy and dropped onto the end of the bench, jostling Lewis and forcing everyone to move up a few inches.

"What's that then?" Doyle asked, eyeing its colour dubiously. Certainly not Guinness, but surely not far off.

"Local brewery," Bodie said approvingly, "Damn The Lighthouse."

"You what?"

"I swear – that's what it's called."

Doyle took a swallow and winced. "S like treacle."

"Ah stop whinging and get it down your neck. Put hairs on your chest, that will."

"Not something we all 'ave to work at," he retorted. There, he could do it. They could go

back to being themselves again.

And sure enough, Bodie had turned to Murph, had raised an eyebrow at him.

"You're a bit quiet. Whassup with you then?"

"You look like you lost a pound and found tuppence, mate" Doyle chimed in, encouraging.

"Come on then," Bodie grinned, "Tell Uncle Bodie and Uncle Ray a-all about it."

"Sod off, Bodie."

"Well *that's* not very nice," Turner interrupted from across the table, "What's the matter Murph, got girl problems?"

Murphy shot him a look that had quelled many a hardened villain, but to Turner, being CI5 as well as being Turner, it was water off a duck's back. "I reckon Murph's got a girl back in town who's not best pleased with him right now. All wound up and no chance of getting his end away, eh Murph?"

Doyle, who had helped Murphy make excuses to his last girlfriend not a week before, glanced questioningly at him, and caught the flicker of a look in the direction of... He checked and then double-checked. Fisher? And Fisher was staring at the table, for all the world unconcerned with the conversation around her. So *that* was how the water lay - and there he'd always had Susie down as a right ball-breaker. Well, Murph was a good bloke, and someone on the squad should end up happily ever after.

"Ah, c'mon Jack," Bodie was saying, slinging one arm around Murphy's shoulders, "That's no way to talk to the love-lorn."

Murphy, Doyle noted with amusement, had blushed a deep red, but he had also started to shred a beer mat, and after the week's high tension that was *not* likely to be a good sign. He kicked Bodie under the table, who lifted his head immediately and followed the casual turn of his gaze to Susie and then back to Murph. He was rewarded with a raised eyebrow, and a twist of the lips. But which way would Bodie go? He could decide to play cupid to the most unlikely couples, but then again he could be the world's worst tease when he was in the mood.

"I'll show you both "best pleased" if you don't put a sock in it," Murph growled, causing Bodie to remove his arm post-haste. "It's been a long week for those of us actually *working*, some of us might be *justified* in feeling tired."

Which of course set the lot of them off, and Doyle was able to join in the communal moan, a part of it all, of the scene being enacted all across England right now, workers let loose from the confines of the week, giving vent to their complaints about the boss, about each other, letting their hair down, ready to relax and enjoy a weekend to themselves at long last. And if

their group was a little louder, their laughter a little more desperate, well there was, after all, a difference between what they did and what people *thought* civil servants did.

Except that when he looked up, Bodie's eyes were on him, and they were dark against the brilliance of the pub crowd, and there was a smile on his lips.

"Your round, isn't it mate?" he dimly heard Turner say over the babble of voices. And then Bodie's glass was being settled pointedly on the table in front of him, encircled still by Bodie's hand, fingers that had barely an hour ago been making free with Doyle's body.

"Come on Doyle, a man could die of thirst around you. Lighthouse please."

"Yeah, alright..." he stood up, gripping the glass close to the rim, deliberately and carefully not touching Bodie, making himself look around the table, take orders from the rest of them with the traditional rolled eye and heavy sigh.

He could do this.

oOo

It was a good fifteen minutes before he was served, and by the time he got back the conversation had turned to a quietly spoken dissection of the case, heads huddled close, voices serious. Murphy had moved onto his own chair, was leaning in with the rest of them, and Doyle took his place at the end of the table, listening only vaguely, not wanting to join in. It was *over*, he didn't want to re-hash it out loud, bad enough having to get it all down on paper for Monday.

After a moment, Bodie too turned away from the huddle, eyed Doyle speculatively. "Not bad this place, is it?"

Doyle nodded slowly. "I've seen worse."

"Yeah, and most of 'em are down my way," Bodie tapped the table, near his hand. "Could do with a week down 'ere you know, not just a poxy weekend."

"I suppose..."

"Be quite cosy in the winter too. Yeah, it's a bit of alright this place," Bodie nodded. "All those books up there," he pointed to a long line above the mantelpiece, "Are *actual* ships logs from the 1800s – a couple of 'em are even earlier. Must be worth a fortune..."

It was coming, Doyle could feel it as though it had left Bodie's breath before the words themselves, rushing out at him in its eagerness to be said, to be accepted, to change the night from *this* to *that*.

"We could always get a room up here for the night. Better than that poxy B and B they put me in."

"It's a hotel, Bodie." *It's illegal in a public place, Bodie.* "Be a sight more expensive than letting Cowley pick up the tab where we are now."

"Yeah, but think about it, we could just stagger upstairs in the wee small hours instead of having to beg a lift and go back out in *that*." He gestured to the nearest rain-slashed window. "Ah, go on, Ray, you know you want to."

And he did, he *did* want to, but he'd made his decision. "Nah, mate, be quicker to head off tomorrow from where me gear is. You should though." He stood up suddenly, needing to get away, not wanting to hear with one ear how the case had nearly ballsed up, or to feel the heat

of Bodie on his other side. "Goin' for a piss," he muttered vaguely, and headed at random for one of the doors in the back.

oOo

The car park was almost full, three rows gleaming wetly under the twinned streetlamps, red and blue and white-turned-orange in the garish light. High above them a bright-ringed halo of slanting rain marked each civilised end, the boundaries, behind which the night was darker than black. Cross that line, leave the light, leave even the shadowed edges, and you were somewhere else, somewhere decent people shouldn't be. Shouldn't want to be.

But on a night like this it called to him.

Images flashed across the dark, things that weren't there, things that *should never have been there*. Himself, hands pulled behind him, tied to the end of Bodie's bed, so that he was standing with the cold, elegant iron of the bedstead at his back. Bodie paced in front of him, his hot gaze the perfect counterpoint, and Doyle's cock strained towards him, impossibly hard. But Bodie hadn't been playful, hadn't just *wanted* him. Bodie had been angry. Bodie had been furious at the near miss they'd both had that day. And god help him, that had just made Doyle even harder.

"What you doing out here then?" Bodie's voice practically bounced from the walls, and Doyle started, pulled from his thoughts by the cheer of it.

It was wrong.

He shook his head, turned uneasily back to his study of the night. "Fancied some fresh air," he hedged, "Away from that lot."

"Yeah, they can get a bit much sometimes." Bodie leaned in to his ear, lowered his voice, "Let's go home, eh? Back up to town?"

No.

Say it out loud. "Nah, not tonight."

"Why not?" Bodie sounded surprised, taken aback. As though he would always go along with it, with whatever Bodie wanted...

"Not in the mood."

"Ah, you're not gonna brood about earlier are you? Lucas jumped the gun, like the twat 'e is."

"It was you nearly ended up with my bullet through your lug'ole."

"Yeah, but I didn't. And if 'e hadn't been there in the first place, playing the hero..."

"Still..." Because that much was true, Lucas *had* been playing the hero. But surely if he, Doyle, hadn't been distracted, he would have seen what was about to happen, and they'd have one more live prisoner, one fewer dead hijackers, and be one more man up to strength in the squad for another month.

"Come on Doyle, happens all the time. Bet I can get you *in* the mood..."

"Bo-die..."

"Didn't take all that long, earlier in the bathroom did it? Unfinished business, mate."

He wasn't going to listen, he didn't have to listen.

"If we went back up to town, Doyle, the things I could do to you..."

"Bodie..." but the catch in his voice betrayed him.

"We could take it slow, I could spend the entire night making sure that you came so hard you couldn't get out of bed for days. Except..."

No.

"...I don't think that's what you want tonight, is it sunshine?"

No.

"I think..."

Bodie always knew what he wanted...

"That we should go home, to your nice, warm flat..."

No...

"No, Bodie." He took a deep breath, let the words slide out into the night, into the shadows and away towards the light that seeped from the edges of the door at the end of the corridor,

"That's enough, it's over." The light seemed to grow brighter, and he wanted suddenly to be back inside, back with the glow and the shine of the Friday evening crowd.

"What?" Bodie was looking as stunned as he'd ever seen him, his mouth open, eyes wide, caught an unexpected broadside.

Like a kid who's had his toy taken away from him Doyle thought, unforgiving. Never mind, there were plenty of toys back in the lounge, soft yielding toys who would positively swoon to do whatever it was that Bodie wanted them to do.

"I said it's over. Done. Finished." He made his voice harsh, "I've had enough."

"You don't mean that Doyle, you're just wound up over the case and..."

"No!" he shook his head, "I mean it Bodie. No more." He turned to shoulder past him, to push his way back to the bar, but Bodie was blocking the corridor, a solid immovable object, his face hardening.

"What's this about, eh?"

"I don't owe you anything."

"Your life, a few dozen times over."

"Repaid with interest."

"Christ Doyle, even your birds get some excuse out of you!"

Trying too hard, Bodie, I don't buy it. "Yeah, but you're not exactly a bird, are you? Game's over, Bodie."

"What *game..?*" But Doyle was gone, taking advantage of the slight uncertainty that he heard, the loosening of Bodie's stance. There was something in him that winced at that, that felt Bodie's confusion twining around his own and pulling them, impossibly, closer together, but he set his heart against it, strode towards that light instead.

Back at the table Lucas was holding forth about some sailing trip he'd taken around the coast of Turkey in a... a gulet? Doyle stood behind them all for a moment, listening, and curled his lip. Sun and sand and women, he thought, now one of Bodie's stories was worth a dozen...

And there he was, back to Bodie barely minutes after telling him that he'd had enough.

It wouldn't work, he had to leave. Casting about desperately, he spotted Fisher making her way past the bar to the ladies', hands in her jacket pockets, looking more casual in the borrowed clothes than he'd ever seen her. Of course you had to have respect for a woman who could do as much damage as she could while wearing high heels, but what Murph saw in her... Hardly a delicate flower, their Susan.

He glanced back at the table, saw Murph turn his head away quickly, and looked back in the

direction Fisher had taken. Yeah, someone in the squad should have their week end well.

The gents' was off the same corridor as the ladies', and under that guise again, as Susie strolled back in his direction, he waylaid her neatly, then did nothing but smile gently and stare into her eyes.

"Now Doyle..." she gazed back at him warily, raising her hands placatingly. "It's not like you haven't done far worse, you know."

"Ah," he tutted at her, shaking his head slowly, "Susie, Susie, Susie." Holding her eyes, still smiling, he slid his own hands into the pockets of her jacket, and used it to pull her forward, pressing their bodies together. He leaned in, nuzzled her cheek in a kiss, and whispered in her ear, "It may not be tonight, it may not be tomorrow, but you know your time will come..."

"Excuse me madam, is this man bothering you?" Murph's voice sounded behind him, and he released Fisher with apparent reluctance, tucking his hands into a pair of jeans two sizes too big for him and smiling innocently up at them both.

"He couldn't bother his own granny," Fisher replied scornfully over her shoulder as she was led away, but Doyle noticed that she let Murphy hook in a chair from the table behind, and leaned in close to hear what he was saying. The baleful glares they shot in his direction he took as a bonus – it was the car keys in his pocket that sent relief flooding through him, that promised escape and home and safety.

He carried on to the gents', actually needing it now that he'd thought about it, frantically trying to remember which car Susie had pulled from the pool last. If he had to he'd try every last one in the car park, but it would be so much easier if his brain would work and he could just *remember*.

"You thought this was a game?"

Too slow. He shouldn't have stopped, he should have carried on straight out the door once he had the keys. He took a breath, did up his fly, and turned to the row of old enamel sinks on the opposite wall. Bodie, he saw, was standing squarely in front of the doorway. He could either hope that someone would come in, or that it wouldn't take too long to flatten him once the first punch flew.

"Not any more." He rinsed his hands through the lukewarm water, dried them on the towel that hung limp and grey over the radiator. He'd need good grip, probably. "It stopped being a game two weeks ago." *Damn*, he hadn't meant to say that. Tired, he was too tired for this.

"Two weeks..." and there was, of course, the dawn of understanding across Bodie's face. His eyes widened, his nostrils flared, his head tilted upwards, just slightly, as comprehension warred with... with relief? Except that it didn't, because Bodie *didn't* understand, he *didn't* know how it felt.

"Ray, that was..." Bodie stopped, backtracked in whatever he had been about to say. "It was never a game, Ray."

He shook his head. "No, no it wasn't, was it? Took it very seriously, you did, didn't you?"

Bodie's face tightened. Doyle felt threat fill the air and he took half a step backwards, wanting the wall at his back. But Bodie's blow, when it came, wasn't with fists, wasn't even with words. He stepped straight up to Doyle, let him raise his hands to push him away, and reached into his jeans pockets, just as Doyle had done to Susie. And when he pulled back, the car keys were, of course, clutched tight in one fist.

"You're not going anywhere until you talk to me."

"You bastard, you've got no right." Doyle did push him then, advancing as Bodie retreated in his turn.

"I do if you're throwing around accusations like that, sunshine. Because if I *did* take it seriously, then it was because you wanted me to."

And that was what froze Doyle, what stopped him and rooted him to the spot. Of course Bodie was absolutely right. "And that," he said, gaze steady, "is why this finishes *now*. Now give me the keys..."

Behind them the door swung open, a young man in a rumpled suit stepped into the room, and Bodie smiled, humourlessly. "I don't think so, Ray," he said, and was gone.

Doyle scowled, retreated to a cubicle as the stranger eyed him suspiciously before turning to the urinal. He pulled the toilet lid down and sat, eyes shut, listening to the hiss and splash of the man's piss, the gurgle of the drain, the closing of the door. He let his heart-rate slow, tried to slow his mind from its shaky racing as well. Bodie wanted a fight, did he? Well he, Doyle, was not inclined to give him one.

He stood up again, unlocked the door. All he needed was another set of keys.

oOo

When he got back to the others, there was a third glass in front of every seat but his own, and Mac was balancing a tray precariously on top of the dead glasses in the centre, distributing the fourth.

"Thought you'd fallen in," Lucas chanced his arm, something making him suspect Doyle's temper, and Doyle tilted his head at him. Let them think he was feeling ropery, be fewer questions that way when he vanished for the night. Lucas wouldn't have keys though, not with his arm bandaged like that, it was Mac he'd have to finagle for their car. Either way it meant dealing with both of them. He turned his gaze to Murphy, half-surprised that he hadn't slipped away with Susie already. Now *they* surely wouldn't need even one car tonight. Right, Murph it was.

Bodie appeared again, dropped into the seat at the end of the table with a quick assessing look in his direction.

"No luck, then?" McCabe asked him, and Bodie scowled.

"Some people don't know a good thing when they have it."

"Ahh, she didn't fall for your charms," Lewis chimed in, mock-sympathy from the man with a wife at home in Putney.

"Oh, she fell alright, reckon she was scared of getting out of her depth."

What depth? Sod off, Bodie, if you think that transparent *crap* is gonna work... "Maybe she was worried there was something down there that would bite."

But it came out in one of those strange moments of communal hush, and somehow everyone was looking at him, and he wondered if he'd sounded as bitter as he'd felt. Bloody hell...

"So when did you run into pirates then?" Turner asked Bodie, changing the subject abruptly, bizarrely.

"Pirates?" Bodie asked, pint hovering halfway between table and mouth, "What pirates?"

"You said something to Doyle about pirates, back at the farmhouse."

And Bodie's head swivelled slowly in his direction, a gleam began in the depths of his eyes, one that only Doyle would recognize for what it was. A challenge then. What was he up to now, what was this story that he thought it would stir Doyle, make him change his mind perhaps? Or perhaps just show him, once and for all, that it was Bodie who called the shots and always would? In the midst of the Friday night crowd, Doyle met and held his gaze, just a man, egging his best mate on, right?

He looked like a pirate himself, Doyle thought, dark and rakish, black moleskin waistcoat undone over a loose cotton shirt. Whatever had made him pick that combination from the pile? "That scar on your..." he paused, swallowed. *Not* what he wanted to draw people's attention to, "...leg."

But Bodie took a long pull at his pint and licked his lips, looking as relaxed as Doyle felt tense. "Ah, yeah..."

"Just another one of your stories, right mate? It'll be cannibals in darkest Africa next."

"Oh these blokes were real alright," Bodie began, leaning back on the bench, surveying his audience. Their attention assured, he toyed with a bar mat in one hand, and took another mouthful from his pint, just enough to raise their expectations a tad higher.

"We'd been on leave in Singapore..."

"On leave?" Doyle snorted inelegantly, "This was a legitimate job then was it?"

Bodie had the grace to look briefly sheepish before he shot a smug glance around the table,

"... taking in some of the local *attractions*, and this mate of mine said he knew someone who had a boat heading round the coast for a few days, did we want to head over to the islands, you know, see what was there. Why not, right?"

Doyle had a brief vision of Bodie, young and tan, and half-dressed in the Pacific sunshine, swinging between the sheets of some sleek sailboat. Despite himself he crossed his arms on the table and leaned forward slightly. He had to look normal, and listening wasn't going to hurt.

"So we set off, and everything's great. She's a beauty, fifty foot and well-stocked. Turned out Harris had *connections*, you know? So there we were, third day out, full of beer and bonhomie, and this powerboat turns up beside us..."

"Out of the blue?" suggested Lewis innocently, and Bodie nodded briefly in his direction.

"That's right, out of the blue. So I've been taking a turn at the wheel..."

"Ey, Bodie! A pirate walks into the bar with a ship's wheel down his trousers..."

"Ah Christ, Mac, give us a break..."

"... and the barman looks at him, and he has to ask. He says, 'That looks bloody uncomfortable, why've you got a ship's wheel down your trousers?'"

Bodie was wincing, had raised one hand to half-cover his face. "Mac..."

"Aahhr,' the pirate says, 'It's driving me nuts.'"

The table erupted, having been well-lubricated for just such a moment, and absent-mindedly Doyle drank from his own pint again. Bodie's eyes had crinkled in wry amusement, he looked as if he was thoroughly enjoying himself, Doyle thought, lit up from inside with it all. Didn't matter though, he wasn't going to fall for it.

"Go on then," he said, breaking every rule he'd ever made about encouraging his partner. Whatever Bodie wanted to tell him, he could just get on with it, get it over with. "This boat pulls up beside you..."

"This boat pulls up beside us," Bodie agreed, catching Doyle's eye for a moment, "With a dozen bloody ugly blokes on it, and blow me if they don't pull out foot-long knives, the lot of 'em, and board the yacht."

"You're making it up!" Turner declared scornfully, "Pirates on the high seas!"

"Straight up," Bodie assured them, "Found out later it's quite the enterprise round that way. Bit bloody late then, mind you."

"When was this? How old were you?" Susie asked, drawn from her conversation with

Murph.

Bodie tilted his head to one side, considering, "Nineteen? Twenty? Something like that. So anyway. We're outnumbered two to one, and none of us has a shooter to hand. They kicked Dieter over the side, just to show they could I think, and that shut the rest of us up pretty quick. Well, except me..."

There was a chorus of groans, and Doyle made sure his was the loudest. His heart had sped up just a little, he could feel his breathing coming ever so slightly faster. A twenty year old, half-naked Bodie out to save the world...

"In the heat of the moment I was *just* stupid enough," he looked down self-deprecatingly, surely knowing the effect that look had on Doyle, all dark lashes against pale skin, that quirk of the lips. "To try something with the leader, and of course it took seconds for a couple of his mates to have me down on my knees in front of him, and my hands tied to the rail behind me."

Doyle's breath caught, and he ducked his head down for a moment, closing his eyes. A twenty year old, half-naked Bodie, bound, on his knees in front of... *Damn* his partner, of all the things to bring up in public... Because Doyle's cock had sprung erect at the thought of it, at the idea of being tied and helpless, and *Bodie knew it*. Something warm rubbed solidly but briefly along his inside thigh, under the table, and he clenched his jaw. *Bloody hell*. But Bodie was still talking.

"So just to show how tough he was, the leader slides his knife down the front of me shirt..."

There was nothing to do but to sit it out, to pretend that everything was fine, that this was not the end of his world.

"... and slices through it like butter. Buttons everywhere, right, and I thought me last minute had come..."

Doyle moved in his seat again, and again there was that fleeting touch on his leg, innocent as a mate stretching out beneath the table.

"Now, they're from somewhere local, and none of us speak the lingo, so we 'ad no idea what they were talking about, but all of a sudden they get even more excited, and I can 'ear another boat in the distance, getting closer fast."

Bodie paused to sup from his pint, didn't look at Doyle at all. "Next thing I know the ugly one in front of me was waving his knife around. He comes *this* close to ending the good name Bodie forever, the bastards all jump back over the side onto their own boat and they're gone, just like that!"

"*What?*" there was a chorus of protests, Turner the loudest, "You mean that's *it*? Come on Bodie, where's the bit where you chase 'em down single-handedly and are given the key to the entire world?"

"All I said was it was a true pirate story," Bodie shook his head, "I didn't say it was a good one."

Oh, but it had been good, Doyle thought, hating himself, whether it was a true story or not. He took a mouthful of his pint, raised his eyes to meet Bodie's, and this time there was no mistaking that look. He knew he'd got Doyle going, knew the heat and the desire that had flooded him. Did he think that was enough?

"Hey, Susie, what's long an' hard, and full of seamen?" Lucas dared, full of dutch courage and two seats away. Unfortunately one of them was Murph's seat, and Murph had a long reach.

"Had this bird though," Bodie continued over the laughter, apparently to no one in particular, "Who liked it a bit rough sometimes..."

Fuck, that was *enough*! Doyle pushed himself away from the table, drew one hand back, clenched in a fist, and reached out with the other to grab Bodie's shirt. "You lousy..." But he was still too slow, Bodie was on his feet, had caught Doyle's wrist in a bruising grip, and had it twisted behind him in an armlock. People at the tables around them were drawing away, little gasps of alarm rippling out across the room.

"One of yours was she, Doyle?" he heard Turner ask, as Bodie manhandled him through the crowd and out the front door.

"Get the *fuck* off me, Bodie!" he pulled away, so angry he felt sick, actually thought he might be ill, "What the hell was all that in aid of?"

"Well if you won't listen to me anywhere else..."

"Not funny, Bodie. What if one of 'em cottoned on, eh? Did you think of that?"

"*That's* not what you're afraid of."

They kept coming back to this.

"And you're not afraid of what we did that night, and you're not afraid of shooting me in the field, and you're not afraid of a little story in front of the lads."

"Is that right?" Doyle asked, heart pounding, "So tell me then, *Ms Ross*, what am I afraid of?"

"Look at Murph and Fisher." Bodie grabbed him again, dragged him towards the window. The rain, which in any case had been blowing from the other side of the building, had eased to a fine drizzle, and the glass was just slightly blurred, turning the figures and the light inside soft-edged.

"*What?*" Doyle pulled his arm free, but Bodie just took it again and turned him so that he could see the table of agents, where Susan and Murphy were leaning relaxed now on the bench, heads close together.

"Look at them. *They'll* make it not just because they *want* each other, not just because they understand the job. They *know* each other, you can see it in them."

"Bloody romantic..." There was no guarantee that *anyone* would make it, not ever.

"I'm right though, aren't I?"

"So?"

"So I *know* you."

"You *think* you know me. You *think* you know what I want, what..."

"*Yeah, I do.*" Bodie said harshly, "But you know *me* just as well. Only you *don't* think about it."

Doyle was silent, fury still coursing through him, but quietened now, waiting for what it all meant to sink through the heat of the words. He didn't *think* about Bodie? He did nothing *but* think about Bodie, about how much he *needed* Bodie. When he closed his eyes, all he saw was the look on Bodie's face as he was thrown to the bed, hands still bound at his back, as Bodie sank deep into him, again and again and again.

He stared into the glass of the window, seeing first the pane, then the colourful blur of people behind it, then the dark of the night reflected over his shoulder. And there was Bodie's reflection too, only Bodie was standing, solid and real, right there beside him. And Bodie needed him just as much as he needed Bodie.

"We're both tied, Ray, to the bed, to the boat..."

To each other.

Doyle let out a breath, closed his eyes, and nodded, and when he opened them again Bodie had stepped in close, so that he could feel the warmth, the life, the *light* of him through his skin to his very bones, rushing through his blood, filling his veins and his heart and his soul.

"And Doyle? If you come home with me now, I'll give you rope, I'll give you cuffs, I'll give you whatever you want. And then I'll bend over for you."

Doyle swallowed at the promise, wanted it, wanted *them*, knew now that he could have it all. "We'll need those car keys."

"Fisher's or Murph's?" Bodie held up two sets, his mouth widening into a smile, his eyes dancing, and there was the light right there in them, welcoming.

And on the long drive home, Doyle got Bodie to re-tell the story, perhaps slightly elaborated, of the time he'd been captured by pirates...

~splash~

Tick Tock

by J osey

Determinedly ignoring his smirking partner, Bodie kept his hands clasped behind him and his eyes front. The old man was in a stinking mood.

"Thanks to your stupidity, Special Branch are down five men for their security detail this weekend."

"Yes, sir." Like hell was it his fault. If Sinclair hadn't been trying to put one over on his boss then CI5 wouldn't have ended up involved in the first place. It was hardly Bodie's problem that their safehouse got pumped full of tear gas.

"The men in question were assigned to the daughter of the American Ambassador..." Cowley paused, glaring over his glasses at Bodie. "Something you find amusing, 3.7?"

And he wasn't even the one grinning. "No, sir."

"I should think not." The glasses were shoved back up. "This is no laughing matter. Major Carlisle is threatening to make a formal complaint."

Which would mean enough paperwork to sink the Titanic twice over. Bodie sighed under his breath. So much for Doyle's long planned dirty weekend in Brighton. Ray was never going to forgive him for this.

But the old man hadn't finished. "Luckily for you, he's offered a compromise."

"Sir?" Hope sprung eternal.

The glasses came off completely and were laid to one side. "You and 4.5 will take the place of his men, since it was your fault they're incapacitated in the first place."

And was so easily crushed.

"But, sir!" Oh now Doyle decided to be unimpressed. About time. "I wasn't even there."

"No," Cowley agreed, "but since the pair of you work as a team, I'm putting you on this together. Maybe you'll be a better influence on your partner in the future." Another pause. Bodie took the opportunity to squint out of the corner of his eye. Doyle's smirk was well and truly gone. Served him right. "Och, man, it's a party. There's not much that can go wrong."

Famous last words. Now the place was bound to end up the target for every lunatic fringe element London could conjure up.

"Is there a present danger, sir?" Bodie asked, already resigned to doing the job. Cowley ordered, Bodie jumped. That was the way of the world, however unfair it might be.

"Nothing explicit, but being what it is, Special Branch doesn't want to take any chances."

"No, sir."

"Right, sir."

Glasses replaced, Cowley opened a file on his desk. "That will be all, gentlemen." Bodie headed for the door, hard on Doyle's heels and as eager to escape.

The second it closed behind them, Doyle turned on him, whispering heatedly, "What the bloody hell crawled up his backside?"

Bodie shook his head - Betty was well within hearing range - and began poking his partner in the direction of the lift. Grudgingly, Doyle gave way, still muttering at the unfairness of being punished when it was Bodie who'd been in the wrong.

"Look at it this way, sunshine," Bodie said, hitting the call button. "How bad can it be, eh? Guarding some American bird? And at a party, no less. If we're lucky the place'll be crawling with film stars." Not that Bodie would be on the prowl. He had eyes for no one but his partner these days.

Doyle grunted in response, swinging into the lift when it arrived. It looked like Bodie wasn't gonna be forgiven quite so fast.

The lift doors were almost closed when Betty appeared in the corridor waving a piece of paper. "Bodie? Doyle?" Doyle stuck his hand out and the doors shot open again. She handed him the sheet with a beatific smile. "You'll need this. Oh and a message from Mr Cowley. He says you'd both better be on your best behaviour. He doesn't want to hear any reports of bad language in front of the children."

"Children?" Bodie queried as the lift doors slid closed.

Doyle who'd been staring at the paper, glanced up with a baleful expression. "Yeah, fifty of 'em and we get to pick our costumes up tomorrow."

oOo

In front of him were tight leatherette trousers that were bound to give him a rash, a plain white shirt with a stain on the front, a long scarlet coat trimmed in tacky gold cord, and a stuffed parrot.

Ignoring the woman behind the counter, Bodie picked up the parrot and sniffed it suspiciously. Mothballs. Lovely. Well, Cowley had another think coming if he thought he was carrying that thing. It would get in the way if he had to pull his gun.

As far as the rest went, it was horrible.

He gave the trousers a despairing poke and fixed the shop assistant with his best 'indulge me' expression. "Got these in real leather?"

She wasn't moved. "I'm afraid the costume you ordered comes with those trousers. Real leather is reserved for our deluxe package." If she peered down her nose any more, her eyes would cross.

"How much?"

"Twenty pounds."

Bodie winced but handed it over. If he had to attend this party looking like an idiot, he'd at least do it looking like a well-dressed idiot.

Now the saleswoman was all smiles. "What an excellent choice, sir." After a moment in the back, she returned with a hanger of plastic covered clothes that looked like they'd never been worn. This coat was blue with a scarlet lining, and the shirt had a lace frill. Thankfully, there was no parrot, but there was a hook.

The woman was talking again as she parcelled up the costume. "The trousers are real leather, sir, and the shirt is silk. Obviously five of the twenty pounds is a security deposit and any specialist cleaning will be added to the bill when the costume is returned. Would sir like the other costume upgraded as well?"

Did he? Bodie tapped the counter thoughtfully.

Let's see. Yesterday, Ray had stormed out of HQ, slammed into his car and taken off like the hounds of hell were after him, leaving Bodie without a lift home. Later that evening, when Bodie had called to make his peace, he'd been treated to a Doyle special that left his ears ringing for the next half an hour. And this morning he'd been ordered to go and pick up the costumes while Ray phoned the hotel to try - and Bodie had no trouble remembering the exact words - "to sort out the complete fuck up" Bodie had made of Doyle's love life.

Looking at the second costume laid out on the counter - a striped shirt, brown trousers and bandanna - Bodie made up his mind. "No, don't bother. He's a scruffy bugger, anyway."

He dropped Doyle's costume in his front hall, after ringing the bell and letting him know it was there, and then headed back to his own flat. On the apology front, the ball was well and truly out of his court and he was damned if he was going to crawl. Nope, after all that had been said and done, Ray would have to come to him.

The following day, Thursday, he was treated to the cold shoulder. Doyle laughed and joked with everyone in the squad room, and ignored Bodie completely. Not that it bothered him. Doyle was professional enough that if they did get called out, Bodie knew he'd put their spat behind them and it'd be business as usual, and he'd be damned if he was going to be blackmailed into apologising.

Finally, on Friday, he was greeted by a wide smile and he knew the sulk had worn off and he'd been forgiven.

"I did a bit of asking around," Ray was saying as he stirred Bodie's coffee. "The party's got a Peter Pan theme, which is how come we're done up as Captain Hook and his less-good-looking-brother. And we're not gonna be the only ones looking like idiots, all the Special Branch lads have to wear 'em."

That was something, at least.

Not convinced that his good books had been successfully wooed, Bodie merely grunted in reply, pretending to be immersed in the sports pages. Doyle raised an eyebrow at him, but continued talking. "Yeah, seems like every costume place in London is sold out. We were lucky they booked ahead."

And some of us were luckier than others.

Keeping his smug smile to himself, Bodie took his coffee and kept his eyes glued to the newspaper. And so it continued. Doyle attempted to make conversation, and Bodie pretended to be too busy to reply. By lunch, Bodie could tell that Doyle was on his final nerve, which broke when Murph invited Bodie out for a drink and he accepted. Since Doyle had asked earlier and been rebuffed, confrontation was inevitable.

"Fancy telling me what's got your knickers in such a twist?"

They were in the bog. Eschewing the resultant comments, Doyle had followed him in there.

Bodie shook, zipped and went to wash his hands. All in silence.

"Come on, mate. This isn't like you."

No, it wasn't. But Bodie was getting monumentally fed up with Doyle expecting him to be there whenever he regained his temper, however badly he might have treated Bodie in the meantime. It was about time the grumpy git got a taste of his own medicine.

"It's because I've been having a go, innit."

Apparently Doyle wasn't as oblivious as Bodie thought.

Bodie turned to leave, only to find Doyle between him and the door. Rather than speak, he raised his eyebrows.

"It's just... it took me ruddy ages to get Carol to agree to Brighton and..." The explanation trailed off in the face of Bodie's silence. "Look, I'm sorry, alright? I know it wasn't your fault we got dumped with this baby-sitting job."

Close, but no coconut. "And?"

"And I'm sorry I took it out on you, even if she did give me the elbow."

She'd dumped him? Inside Bodie was doing the tango. On the outside, he was the picture of sympathy. "She didn't."

Doyle couldn't have looked more hang-dog if he'd tried, hands shoved in his jacket pockets, shoulders slumped. "Yeah, Wednesday night after I called and cancelled."

"Not impressed, huh?"

"Could say that. Gave me the full 'never darken her door' routine."

That explained the mood. Buoyed up by his partner's misfortune, Bodie was magnanimous in victory. Slinging an arm round Doyle's shoulder's, he leaned in. "Know what you need, sunshine?"

"Whassat?"

"A night on the town with Uncle Bodie. We'll find ourselves a couple of willing birds, and wine and dine 'em `til they fall into our laps like a couple of ripe lovelies." That was the selling point. Bodie, however, had no intention of sharing Doyle with anyone.

"I dunno. It's the end of the month and I lost me deposit on-

"All expenses paid," Bodie offered. "We'll eat at Mancino's, and you can kip at my place, so don't worry about paying for a taxi."

A crooked grin was aimed his way. "You're on. Thanks, mate." And with that Doyle sauntered off, leaving Bodie to wonder how forgiving Ray had just cost him half a week's wages.

oOo

"Twenny-four men on a dead man's chest!"

"S fifteen," Bodie slurred, aiming for the keyhole and missing.

Stopping halfway through the *yo ho ho*, Doyle frowned blearily. "Wha' is?"

"Fifteen men... Onna dead man's ches'."

"Izzit?" That took deep thought from both of them. "Might be right, at that," Doyle said eventually. The key skidded across the door. Again. "Gimme that."

And the key was suddenly gone. Bodie stared at his empty hand, then at his partner. Doyle was bent over, his jeans clinging to his backside like an over-affectionate second skin, his tongue sticking out the corner of his mouth as he concentrated. It was all Bodie could do not to throw himself at him.

"Voila!"

The world went arse over tit, leaving Doyle up on the ceiling. "What you doin' up there?" Bodie asked.

"Was gonna as' you the same thing, mate. `Cept, you're down, not up."

A disembodied hand floated towards him. Bodie grabbed it and hung on. It was entirely possible he'd drunk more than was good for him.

"Hup ya come."

After a dizzying few seconds, the world righted itself again, and he was in Ray's arms, their faces close together, alcohol breath-shared. They were leaning, like a card house, each balancing the other. Was a good metaphor, Bodie decided. A good metaphor for them and how they were. Leaning on each other. Like they were now. Like they should be more. Leaning on each other all the time, not just at work, but when they were off too.

The remainder of the thought got lost in an alcoholic fug, leaving only one word behind. "Bed?"

"Sounds good." Between them they managed to get the door closed and, while Bodie fiddled with the locks, Doyle wandered further into the flat. "Blankets?"

"Bed." `Cause that was where blankets belonged, and Bodie wasn't that much of a slob.

"That's the second pass you made at me." Doyle giggled and hiccuped. "Shoulda picked you up a bird, mate."

Tapping his nose - or trying to and missing - Bodie shook his head. "Ah-*ha*. Don't wanna bird, do I."

Perplexed didn't even start to describe the expression on Doyle's face. "Why?" Then the lights came on. "Oh, `ang on a minute, you're seeing someone. You shoulda said. `S not fair you bein' out onna," another hiccup, "onna Friday night wiv me, if there's someone-"

"There's not. Right where I wanna be." He was probably going to regret this in the morning, but right at this minute, Bodie could neither remember why, nor care. A couple of lurched steps up the hall took him back into Ray's arms.

"Bodie-mate. Never knew you cared."

"That's `cause I never tole you before."

oOo

Vague, but troubling memories drew Bodie from the surface of sleep. He recalled, somewhat fuzzily, getting back to his flat, but most of the night after that was a blank. Except for a nagging suspicion that he might have done something stupid.

Holding his head with both hands, he rolled over - and into the warm naked body sharing the bed with him.

Was that what he couldn't remember? Picking up some bird? He put out an enquiring hand and found a leg. A hairy leg. Christ, what had he brought home? Not a bloke, surely. He'd not done that since Keller and he...

He explored cautiously further up the leg, found a bum and ventured across. Two cheeks, crack, a well-lubed hole, balls. Damn! He must have been sloshed.

The bum pushed back against his hand and he caressed it. Dare he open his eyes? What was he gonna find? Some leather queen he'd picked up down Soho? But no, he'd not been down Soho. He'd been to Mancino's with Ray and then... Then on to a pub. They'd laid a few on and then...

"Bodie?"

"Fuck!"

It wasn't quite levitation, but Bodie managed to be out of the bed and over on the other side of the room in less time than it took him to open his eyes. And when he did, he stared at the bed as if it contained his worst nightmare.

What it actually contained was his dearest wish – Ray Doyle, naked, and obviously not throwing a fit about being there. Which was more than he could say for himself.

Propped up on the pillow, Doyle returned his look, one eyebrow raised. "I'm presuming there's a reason you're over there, clutching your clothes like a virgin bride?"

"Erm," Bodie said, casual as you like. He wasn't fazed. He couldn't be fazed. Bodies didn't get fazed.

"That was intelligent. Can't say I'm surprised, though, not after last night."

There was more? More than him being in bed with Doyle? "What about last night?" he asked.

Doyle sat up, letting the sheets fall and proving that he was indeed completely nude. "You, rat-arsed." A frown skittered across Doyle's face. "Christ, don't tell me you don't bloody remember."

"Course I remember. We went out for a meal and then... and then..."

"And then you tied one on and made a pass at me." Doyle was climbing out of bed, reaching for his clothes. "S'pose I shoulda realised it was just the beer talking."

He had to do something, the set of Doyle's shoulders was eloquent in its anger, but shock had hold of his tongue, tying it in knots and refusing to let him speak.

It hadn't been the beer, he wanted to say. As he woke up more, the memories were starting to return. Throwing himself at Ray and confessing all. Ray's surprise and unexpected pleasure. The way they'd kissed, and the way that kiss had turned into all-out wrestling that left them half-naked and all-wanting on the hallway floor. Staggering to bed, finding the supplies, more kisses and then... and then...

"Ray?" God, please, look at me.

"Yeah?" Doyle sat down on the bed, slid one leg into his jeans.

"You leaving?"

That earned him a sigh and a sideways squint. "You want me to?"

"No?"

"Don't sound so sure of yourself, mate."

"I fell asleep."

"We both fell asleep. Just in case you're worried about your virtue."

"But..." Never in his life had Bodie had such a problem talking about sex. It was his favourite subject - highly edited for certain ears, obviously - but he took great pleasure in sharing the details. Especially with Ray. So why couldn't he ask?

"We got as far as the prep and decided to try again this morning."

"Right."

"That's why-"

"Got it." Now he'd had a chance to look around, he noticed the opened tube of K-Y on the bedside table. On Ray's side, not his.

So Ray must've wanted it.

Of course he'd wanted it. Christ, how could he forget the husky tone in Ray's voice as Bodie's fingers found the right spot. The way his hips had jerked, the way his dick had pushed into Bodie's hair when he'd been trying to suck him off and missed.

That was when they'd given up. Bodie remembered now. Ray decided that if Bodie couldn't manage that, there was no way he was letting him near his arse, which, as Bodie had agreed, was a fair comment. 'Tomorrow,' Ray'd said. 'Wake me up by fucking me.'

That must have been what... When Bodie's hand had... And Doyle had pushed back against him. Shit.

Doyle had pulled his jeans up by now, but he hadn't moved any further, and was still sat on the bed with his back to Bodie, who supposed he should be grateful, under the circumstances. If Doyle'd been the one to jump a mile out of *his* bed, Bodie would have been up and out of the flat before humiliation could really kick in.

And why, precisely, was he reacting like this? Hadn't he wanted Doyle in his bed? Hadn't this been the stuff of his fantasies for months now?

Absolutely.

So, once again, why, exactly, was he standing in the corner of his own bedroom when there was a naked Doyle in his bed?

Obviously because the old man was right. Bodie was stupid.

He shared the insight. "I'm stupid."

A sigh from the bed. "I'm not arguing, but why this time?"

Still Ray wasn't running. In fact, he seemed to be relaxing a bit. And was that a smile?

"Ray?"

"Yeah?" That was more than a smile, it was a muffled snort.

"You laughing at me?"

"Would I?" Shaking shoulders.

Somehow that freed his limbs and he was able to move across the room, to slide across the bed and kneel behind Ray. "Yes, you bloody well would, you rotten sod."

Finally Doyle turned, openly laughing now. "Your face, when you realised it was me! Shoulda remembered it takes a while to get your brain cells lined up."

"Least I've got enough to organise."

"Hey, you casting aspersions on my intelligence?"

"Nothing wrong with your intelligence, it's the brain behind it that worries me."

Not what he should be saying, a nonsense conversation, but lovely for all that. It felt like forever since they'd been this easy with each other, and now there was the added bonus that maybe they could do it in bed. Together. Naked. He reached out a hand, snaked it around Doyle's waist and hauled him up by the belt loops so that they were facing each other, both kneeling.

"Bo-die, have you seen the time?"

Bodie leaned up a little to squint over his shoulder at the clock. Ten forty-five. "Doesn't start 'til three. Got plenty of time."

"Except we're supposed to be at the house by one, and me costume's still at my place." Doyle was pulling away, reaching for his shirt.

Collapsing back, Bodie sighed. So close - he'd thought Doyle wanted it just as much as he did - and yet so far away. His mouth fell into a pout, and he closed his eyes.

Abruptly the bed gave, as Doyle kneeled beside him again. "Keep it for tonight, eh? Take our time? Do it sober and clear-headed."

Soft lips, surrounded by morning stubble, brushed across his cheek and he reached out again, unwilling to let Ray go until the promise was made more solid. The bed creaked as Ray pushed him back into the pillow, bringing their mouths together. Unlike the night before, this kiss was careful, and it was full of promise. Bodie opened to it, letting happiness seep back in, revelling in the way Ray's tongue met his. He felt himself melt inside, recognising that this was real, that Ray was in his bed, that after all this time, the world, and Ray, had finally caught up to his dreams.

With a last suck on his bottom lip, Ray started to pull away. "Hmm, gotta go."

Bodie grunted, and yanked him back for another. It seemed too much to expect that they could recreate this level of casual intimacy later. Something would go wrong. Bound to. That was the way Bodie's life went. So he wasn't about to let go of this without a bit of a fight.

The trouble was, Doyle did. Fight, that is. Pressing one hand on Bodie's chest, he sat up breathing hard. "Christ, Bodie, if I don't go now..." He didn't have to finish. They both knew what him staying would lead to. "Later, okay? Party should be over by six, then back to my place."

Bodie nodded dumbly. The promise was there. He could wait for later, if he had to.

He watched as Ray wriggled sinuously off his bed, shot him the sort of smile that melted him all over again, and wondered how he was going to survive the whole day in Ray's company without being able to touch him.

Ten fifty. Seven hours left. The tick of the clock was loud, and suddenly very, very slow.

oOo

"Avast ye, matey! Prepare to be board..." The tip of Bodie's cutlass - eighteenth century genuine replica - dipped to the ground as the door opened. His jaw followed it. So did his eyes as he started at the boots.

Black boots. Highly polished, calf hugging, soft leather knee boots. With heels. And further up? Striped trousers that, despite being baggy managed to cling to every, single, line and curve, and... bulge. He swallowed before he found himself actually drooling.

And above them? A white shirt, artfully draped and open to the navel, held in tenuous control by a waistcoat embroidered with green and gold.

Where was the scabby costume that had lain across the counter, all ready to become part of Bodie's campaign of revenge?

Regretfully, and bidding a fond farewell to the nipple he'd been ogling, he hauled his gaze a little higher, to meet unshaven skin and a pair of amused eyes.

"You-" Bodie cleared his throat and did his best to stand up straight - not easy in his condition. "You upgraded."

"No thanks to you, mate," Doyle snorted as he turned back into the flat, treating Bodie to a view of his bum-hugging trews. "Cost me an extra tenner, this lot did."

It took a moment for that to sink in, given the scenery, but eventually it did. Only cost him...? "Ten quid?" Bodie spat as he followed him in. "She charged me twenty. And cleaning on top."

"Well, got an honest face, me."

Doyle leaned against the door, hips stuck out and everything on display. Bodie couldn't imagine anything further from honest. On the other hand, this get-up surpassed jeans, dinner jacket and even leathers as far as jaw-droppingly sexy went. Apparently Ray was born to be a pirate. Who'd have guessed?

"Turned out she had this put to one-side for a bloke who cancelled. Bit of luck, going in when I did." Doyle was busy pulling on a belt complete with scabbard. A shining sword was added to the costume, his gun slid into the shoulder holster cunningly concealed under the waistcoat.

Bodie watched with rapt attention as every addition enhanced the overall effect.

This wasn't any ordinary pirate. This wasn't even Errol Flynn - Bodie's personal benchmark for men who swashed his buckle. This... this rough-jawed, tousle-haired, disreputable sea-dog was the version that inhabited the dreams of teenage girls. And played a starring role in more than a few of Bodie's fantasies too.

"You ready then?"

Thankful for the concealing nature of his thigh length coat, Bodie followed him out, feet dragging, feeling like a slightly dowdy cousin. He glanced at the clock on the way. Twelve-thirty. Today was going to be worse than he'd imagined.

oOo

15:20

"Thank Christ I dumped the parrot," Bodie muttered, casting a less than sympathetic eye in the direction of the Special Branch chap who was busy doing his 'Polly want a biscuit,' routine for yet another gaggle of kids. Twenty minutes into the party and already Bodie was at breaking point.

"Don't be rotten. They're enjoying themselves."

"Alright for them." And it was all right for Doyle too. He *liked* kids. Bodie, on the other hand, hadn't particularly enjoyed being one and didn't see why he should tolerate the mucky buggers now.

A tug on his coat tail made him look down, and down again, into a hopeful jam-smearred face. The body below was squirming in a very particular way, spare hand clasping the front of grubby trousers.

"Ray?"

"Yeah?"

"There's something stuck to me leg." He supposed he'd better not try shaking it off.

"Oh, for god's sake, Bodie."

The something stuck became something wet. A wail rent the air.

"Oh for god's *sake* Bodie!"

oOo

15:40

"S'mine! Give it back!"

"No you give it back!"

"I hate you!"

"I hate you more!"

"Come on, you two, break it up and leave the nice pirate alone."

Bodie reclaimed both his hands and watched appreciatively as Ray squatted down between the two children, the urge to reach for his Browning immediately allayed. Those trousers really were something.

oOo

16:10

"What I wanna know is, where the hell are all the parents?"

Ray, who'd just returned from yet another loo run, shrugged. "Be at meetings, I expect. Most of this lot probably have nannies or *au pairs* on an afternoon off. Unpaid babysitters, we are, mate."

"Then they wonder," Bodie grumbled. "In twenty years we'll be hauling half this lot in."

"Yeah, but in another twenty, they'll be the ones giving the orders."

16:25

"Hey, you, I wanna drink!"

"Ray, there's another one."

Doyle glanced up from the small knee he was cleaning of grit. "Forget it, Bodie, I'm busy. Deal with it yourself."

Exchanging glares with a minute red-haired girl with fairy wings, Bodie suppressed a shudder. "Drinks are over there," he tried, gesturing to one of many tables groaning under the weight of assorted food and drink.

"Tinkerbell doesn't pour her own drinks. She's a fairy," she answered with folded arms and a cock of her head that spoke volumes about what a little madam she was.

"Then ask someone nicely to pour it for you." He wasn't going to lose his temper. He wasn't. It was just that kids, especially in high concentrations, gave him the heebie-jeebies. He never knew what to say to them. Cowley himself was less intimidating.

"Did."

"No, you didn't."

"Did so!" accompanied by a stamped foot.

"If you're a fairy, what's the magic word?"

The glare wattage increased. Bodie matched it, crossing his own arms. It was a close run thing, but finally the kid folded. She rolled her eyes. "*Please* can I have a drink."

Bodie allowed himself a smug grin. "Course you can. Go find someone to pour it for- Ow! Bloody little bitch!" She'd kicked him in the shin before running off.

"Now, now. No bad language in front of the kids, remember."

"It's not my fault they won't do as I tell 'em."

"That's `cause they know you're scared. S'like dogs, mate. You've gotta look 'em in the eye and not back down."

Fucking hell, that hurt. "Easy for you to say"

Doyle looked at him. "Well, used to big kids, aren't I?"

Bodie rubbed his shin and didn't deign to reply.

oOo

16:35

"Are you Captain Hook?"

Bodie was watching again, this time while Doyle chatted to a gaggle of the little monsters. They were just over halfway through the afternoon and he was finally hopeful that they might escape unscathed.

Next time he'd volunteer for that stint in the Hebrides as his punishment.

"Not me," Doyle was saying, "I can tell you who is, but you have to keep it a secret because he's here in disguise."

Several pairs of eyes grew rounder. "Disguise?"

"Yeah. He's pretending to be someone else. Which one of you can remember what colour coat Captain Hook wore?"

"Me, me!" Arms waved and little legs jumped up and down.

"Go on then."

"It was red."

"That's right. And what did he have as a hand?"

"A big nasty hook."

"So if he's in disguise, he wouldn't have either of those things, would he?"

The eyes got wider and even rounder. "Nooooo," came the chorus of small voices.

"And if I tell you, what are you gonna do?"

"We aff to feed 'im to the croc-o-dile."

"Really?"

"Yeah, `cause Captain Hook is a bad man."

"So, you wanna know who he is?"

"Yeah, yeah, yeah!"

Ray spun round and pointed at Bodie. "He's right there and he heard me and he's coming to get you!"

Bodie flinched, but the kids screamed *en masse* and immediately scattered in all directions, leaving Ray bent over double laughing.

"An' I thought I was the cruel one. Gonna give them nightmares."

"Give anyone nightmares, you would. Kids like a good scare. Should stop 'em from bothering you an' all."

"You sure it's nightmares I'll be giving you tonight?" Bodie leered, with more hope now than conviction. Bloody tiring, kids were.

Although he woke up a little when Ray bent over him to reach for the hot dogs.

o0o

16:55

"'Ere, this one's yours."

"What do I want that for?"

"Because it needs the loo and it's your turn. Cooper wants one of us up at the front gate for when the parents start arriving,"

"I'll do that."

"No, you blo- ruddy well won't. Come on, Bodie. Fair's fair."

"Don't even know where the loo is."

"Easiest one's inside. Up the main staircase and round to the left. And remember your manners. Leave the silver alone and no sliding down the banisters."

"What, in there?" Bodie eyed the mansion dubiously. "With all the old scrotes and Lady Havershams having their tea party?"

"Oh don't be such a wimp, Bodie."

"Yeah, well, if I see a kid on a trike..."

oOo

17:10

What the hell was Ray up to? He'd been gone for ages and, far from scaring the kids off, his little tale had earned Bodie his own personal audience. Right now there was a group of about twenty of the little... *dears*... huddled a few yards away, whispering and pointing. Bodie shifted uncomfortably. Where was a nice terrorist raid when you needed one?

"Are you ree-ally Captain Hook," a small voice said.

Bodie looked down. It was the same little red-head who'd kicked him in the shins. "Might be," he answered, hedging his bets.

The crowd came closer, jostling and nudging. "Ree-ally, ree-ally?"

They wanted proof. Hands clasped behind him and rocking on his heels, Bodie looked down his nose at them. The question was, how much could he get away with before someone accused him of needless cruelty to small, irritating animals?

Captain Hook. All he could remember was the stuff Doyle had already covered. Although... His hand drifted into his pocket, closing on the plastic hook that came as part of his costume.

The kids continued gathering. He felt like the wolf waiting for the piggies to get just close enough.

"Argh!" he yelled, leaping into a stance and brandishing his hooked hand. "I'll tie ye all to me mainmast and 'ave ya keel-hauled for good measure!"

Again the kids screamed, scattering in all directions.

Smugly, Bodie leaned back against the wall and folded his arms. That was more like it. Horrible little bilge-rats.

oOo

17:25

Ray still wasn't back and Bodie was starting to get jittery. There were a few other pirates

around, but most had drifted off towards the perimeter, unofficially nominating Bodie as chief child-wrangler. He wondered what Cowley would say if he just happened to abandon his charges for, say, the fire alarm that just might go off if he didn't see another adult in the next five minutes.

With blackly perfect timing, a scream split the air. He spun. *There* - from the direction of the ornamental pool. Bodie was running before he was consciously aware of it, his body on automatic as he drew his gun. *Shit*. He hadn't really meant it about terrorists, not with this many kids about.

Bursting through the bushes, he came to an abrupt halt. The pond was empty, except for ever-widening ripples racing to lap at its edges. Something was in there though, and he stepped closer, peering into the murky depths. With a piercing cry, a figure broke the surface, small and terrified. It was the little red-haired girl, the fairy, her dress dragging her down, waterlogged wings wrapping themselves around her arms as she struggled desperately to free herself.

Without stopping to think, he waded in after her. The water wasn't deep after all, hardly more than up to his thighs, but it was dirty and cold and it stank like bloody hell. His foot snagged on something sharp - the same thing that had caught the girl? - pitching him forward. He recovered with a curse, caught sight of the girl going under for the third time, and reached out to scoop her up. How had she got so far out, anyway?

He swept her up in his arms, high above the surface, and held her to his chest. She clutched at him, coughing up water, but sobbing at the same time and clearly more scared than hurt now she was free.

"It's alright, love," he crooned without thinking, holding her closer. "I've got you. You're safe, it's alright."

A gaggle of children lined the edge of the pool as he hauled them, in a deluge of water, onto the safety of the lawn.

A woman, older and well-spoken, appeared from nowhere, snatching the child from him. "Good lord! What on earth happened?"

"She fell in. It's alright, she's okay. Just got a bit of nasty scare."

He might as well not have spoken. The woman ignored him completely, setting the girl on her feet and hauling her away by her arm towards the house, where a group of vaguely interested adults seemed to be gathering. Poor little bugger.

"Captain Hook, is she gonna be okay?" All dressed in green with a rubber sword at his waist, the little boy had to be Peter Pan, despite the American accent.

Bodie patted him on the head. "Yeah, I think so. But tell the others to steer clear of the pool. It's too dangerous to be playing there."

"We weren't playing. Jessie-Lee was gonna drown you."

"She... what?" Just when Bodie was starting to think that kids might be halfway human after all.

"We thought you were Captain Hook, see, so we were gonna tie you up and drown you in the water. With him." The kid pointed at a more than life-size sculpture of a crocodile standing next to the pond.

"Sammy!"

The kid jumped. "That's my mom. Gotta go. Thanks for saving my sister."

Bodie watched as short legs propelled their owner across the lawn. Well, at least one of them had some manners.

And in a strange sort of a way, considering the fact that he was drenched and cold and smelling of he didn't like to think what, the kids had done him a favour. Adults milled at the entrance to the house, reclaiming their charges and organising clothes while the kids protested loudly. It seemed the accident had brought the party to an early close.

At bloody last. Bodie wandered over to the food tables and began helping himself. After what he'd been through, he reckoned he deserved a bit of a treat.

"Thought I might find you 'ere," Ray's voice came from behind. "It's winding up. Reckon we can make a move soon."

Not about to forgive his partner for his vanishing act quite so quickly, Bodie sniffed. "Decided to come back have we? You missed all the excitement."

"I heard. Did your knight in shining armour bit." He wrinkled his nose. "Though it's more like knight in slimy bilge water. Christ, that stinks."

For the first time, Bodie glanced down at himself, at first curiously, then with increasing horror. Slick mud coated his boots and leather trousers. The silk shirt, so pristinely white before, was now splattered a mucky shade of green. The coat, as well as boasting a long tear round the sleeve, had bits of water-lily clinging to the fabric. And the silvery trails right where Tinkerbell had leant on his chest? He didn't want to know.

"Fuck, it's ruined!"

Doyle plucked at the rip. "It'll be alright. Give it a bit of TLC and it'll be right as..." Half the sleeve fell off in his hand. "Maybe not." He shrugged. "Look on the bright side, maybe the old man'll pay for it since you saved that kid from drowning."

They stared at each other for a second, then shook their heads.

Bodie sighed, mentally kissed another twenty quid goodbye. "S'ppose we'd better be going, then."

"Yeah, lets get the hell out of here. Special Branch can mop up. Besides," Doyle eyed him up and down, "I don't think you'd do much for cultural relations just at the moment."

Bodie opened his mouth to protest, closing it without a word when he breathed in pond scum and other un-named horrors.

"Ah, never mind, mate. Look on the other bright side..."

"There's another bright side?"

Doyle cocked his head to one side, considering. "We get to go home." He took a step closer, though there was no one anywhere near them. "I might even let you keel haul me."

"Dunno," Bodie shrugged, put on his best hard-done-by face "Not sure I'm in the mood now."

Doyle's eyes widened in disbelief.

"All this running around, chasing after snot-nosed little brats. You try being Captain Hook for hours on end..."

"Bo-die."

"What?" They started across the now-empty lawn towards the car park.

"You know what happened to Captain Hook in the end, don't you?"

Bodie eyed him warily, not sure whether to be distrustful or expectant. "What?"

"Was eaten by the crocodile, wasn't he?" And Doyle grinned, teeth gleaming, lips stretched wide.

Expectant then.

And with a wild cry, Bodie took off across the grass, his partner in hot pursuit.

~splash~



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