

PART I: IN THE BEGINNING

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IT WAS THE TWINKLE in the eyes that did it. Of course, by the time he discovered that there was a foul-tempered, moody, difficult bastard behind the twinkle, it was too late: he was hooked. Completely, totally, absolutely and utterly, caught, gutted and hung out to dry.

At least, that was how Bodie described love—but only in his less-cynical moments. The rest of the time, it was a cross to be borne, but not silently. The loneliness of loving Doyle and not being loved back had to be concealed by joking and messing about, and the desire that would lurch through him had to be camouflaged by pretending it was all just pratting round, the kind of poofter games that only the straightest of the straight would ever dare indulge in. Whatever it was, however he did it, the one constant was that it had to be kept inside, caged up small in a windowless room, lest it peek out and be seen by green eyes that would miss nothing. Bodie had even found that it became easier as time wore on, a routine of almost music-hall proportions subliminating the desire to love and to hold—and to fuck, as he was always quick enough to admit to himself, lying alone in bed, hand fisted around his weeping cock, his eyes threatening weeping misery even while his body snatched relief.

But that was in the solitude brought by night. Fingers tapping a counterpoint rhythm to the song on the radio, he wasn't even thinking about Doyle sitting beside him today in the car: he was congratulating himself that Doyle, poor bastard, had absolutely no idea whatsoever that his ostentatiously straight partner had fallen for him like a ton of bricks.

“What’s the matter with you then?”

Startled, Bodie shot a glance at his passenger. "What?" he replied with grace, elegance and an extremity of wit.

"I said," Doyle repeated in that tone of voice that made the rest of the world sound like

morons put on this earth purely to try him, "what's the matter? You look like you can't make up your mind whether you've won the Pools—or forgotten to send your coupon in."

"That, Raymond old son, is because you don't recognise complete sexual repletion when you see it."

Doyle gave him one of his patented looks, to which Bodie smiled broadly, the spitting image of a man who was getting more than his share of earth-shattering sex. "So that's it, then?" Doyle said. "Not to worry, sunshine, the first time hits all of us like that. Bit more experience and you'll be taking it in your stride."

"You're just jealous because the wonderful Wendy walks around with her legs crossed. Frustration's a terrible thing, Doyle, you ought to do something about it. I've been told," he leaned over as they stopped for a red light, "that some blokes actually masturbate. So seeing as how you can shoot with both hands..." He let it fade off into his most wicked smile, face lit up with glee and the red glow of the traffic light.

Doyle just glowered at him, turning away in disgust—and defeat. It was still half-dark outside and far too early in the morning for him to come up with anything approaching witty repartée. He passed the time, instead, struggling to fall asleep for another five minutes as Bodie drove them past all the hoarded-up shops and sleepy bus drivers. And trying to ignore Bodie's disgustingly cheerful singing along with '247, wonderful Radio One'.

“Will you fucking shut up?”

"Cheerful as ever, Doyle, eh? C'mon, it's almost half past seven, you should be all bright-eyed and bushy-tailed by now. You've had your coffee—"

"No I 'aven't. Run out."

“Well, your tea, then.”

"No milk, have I? You and your bloody cocoa..."

And if Doyle in this mood were given half the chance, that one small thing would become the symbol for every single thing that was wrong in the world. "Christ, you going to start on about that again? All I did was make a couple of mugs of cocoa—"

"Yeh, then buggered off to meet whichever girl you're working your way through this week, and left me with the mess in the kitchen—"

"And nothing but your imagination." He was pulling into the car park now, Cowley's car visible over there in the far corner, a small clique of agents already clustering like grapes. A glance at the sour-faced expression sitting beside him, and he couldn't resist it, his own face revealing more than it should. "Want me to invite you along the next time? Have a nice little troy, you and me?"

Grinning, he jumped out of the car, approaching Cowley, only the empty space beside him making him turn back in time to see the look on Doyle's face. The speculation he saw there threw him off balance completely, the picture of it reverberating round and around his mind, until he was like a cat chasing its tail. No matter how carefully, nor how often, he ran after it and examined it, he couldn't quite place it. All he could see, when he replayed the memory of that face, was speculation. Thoughtful speculation, coming from Doyle to him.

Needless to say, Bodie was basically useless the rest of the day.

"Christ on a crutch, Bodie!" Doyle was yelling at him before the door was even shut, never mind security locks on. "What was wrong with you today? Apart from the obvious, of course. Shite, forgetting to check that bloke's warrant card—just as bloody well he was a genuine copper. Dozy bastard, you almost landed us right in it. It'll be a fucking miracle if Cowley doesn't have your guts for garters tomorrow."

Being wrong always made Bodie defensive, his face surly as he followed the bellowing Doyle into the living room. "So I had a bit of an off day—"

"Bit of an off day? Christ help us if you ever have a really bad day, then." Jacket dumped, voice diminishing as Doyle disappeared into the kitchen for crockery and cutlery.

"And since when have you been so fucking perfect, tell me that?" Bodie shouted back. Carrier bag on the table, shiny foil trays with their hieroglyphed white lids appearing in aromatic mounds. "I had a bit of an off-day, right, that's it—"

“Yeh, right!”

“—and I’m still better than you are when you’re at your best. Not that I’ve ever seen it to know what it is.”

Doyle, back again, not lowering his voice from shouting through from the kitchen. “Don’t pull that one with me, Bodie. This is the job we’re talking about, not some bird, not some darts game we’ve got a bet on, the fucking *job*, Bodie. That was my neck on the chopping block—”

"A routine security oppo? You call that having your neck on the block? There was no harm done, nothing that could've gone wrong—"

“Apart from you.”

Boodie looked at him then, really looked at him, recognised concern mixed with the temper in the green eyes.

Then a very different tone of voice, one that made Bodie shiver all the way to his toes.
“What’s the matter, Bodie?”

"Nothing." Hearing himself, he didn't believe him either.

"Oh, don't be a prat, Bodie. What the fuck's the matter with you? Something's going on inside that thick skull, and it's affecting the job."

“It’ll be all right tomorrow.”

"You sound hell of a bloody sure about that."

"Course I'm sure. Today was just...a whatd'yamacallit. A momentary aberration."

“Oh yeah?”

"Yeah," and Bodie grinned, all seraphic sinfulness, implying any number of things, from an excess of sexual indulgence the night before to a lack of sexual athletics which was on the verge of being remedied, anything to distract Doyle.

“And you expect me to believe that.”

“Why not?”

"Why not, he says. Why not. I'll tell you why not, you great wally. Because your mind wasn't on the job, that's why not. You weren't paying attention—"

"It was a boring routine job that we could do with our eyes shut, Doyle, so don't say you weren't half-thinking about other things all day as well."

"Yeh, such as what the hell you were playing at, but at least I still managed to do my job, didn't I, Bodie?"

"You saying I didn't?" Attacking now, to cover that he was in full retreat, deflecting Doyle's natural and excessive need to know.
"You trying to say I didn't?"

"You saying you did?"

Bodie just looked at him, recognising Doyle at his stroppy and stubborn best, then shrugged, as if by showing that it was unimportant to him, then Doyle would take the hint. Supremely nonchalant, Bodie went back to the Chinese food, piling his plate into an Everest of chow mein and spring rolls.

"Okay, so now we've established that your mind wasn't on your job today."

"You have left the Force, you know," Bodie mumbled round a piping hot mouthful of sauce-drenched spring roll. "Handed your uniform in and everything."

Doyle, to Bodie's unease, wasn't about to be distracted. "It'll be quicker in the long run if you just tell me, Bodie. Go on, give! You know I won't give in until I find out what the hell is going on."

Without warning, Bodie threw himself across Doyle's lap, lisping, "Oh, darling, darling, it's you! I simply can't contain my love for you, light of my heart!"

"Shurrup, Bodie, and get up off my lap as well. God, look at the mess you've made. If that sweet and sour stains my carpet, I shall have you pay for its cleaning."

Bodie smiled, well pleased with his ploy, everything once more hidden in plain sight where Doyle would never see it. He considered, for a tantalising second, camping it up a bit more, maybe even copping a feel under guise of pratting about, but he shoved the temptation aside almost primly: wouldn't do to get either too greedy or too sure of himself. Best

to leave as is, with Doyle distracted and off the trail.

He should be so lucky. Bodie groaned, as Doyle proved his tenacity once again. "Right, you admit that you were way off today, but you say you'll be fine tomorrow, and I'm supposed to believe you. I'm supposed—just want to get this straight, Bodie—to trust you with my back, after today's complete balls-up, with nothing more reassuring than you saying it'll be all right?"

"Don't you think you're over-reacting, Doyle? Look, so I was a bit slow off the mark today, but so've you been. It was only a routine—"

"Boring job, I know. But how'd you know it was going to stay that way?"

"Didn't, did I? But you know how it is, Doyle. Bit of danger, the adrenalin starts flowing, and you're off and running."

Doyle sat beside him, very quiet, very thoughtful, spearing Bodie with the occasional sharp glance. Bodie, used by now to covering up, ignored it all blithely, carrying on eating, downing his lager, watching the telly. Everything as usual, nothing whatsoever out of the ordinary, or so it seemed, were the observer to miss the tension underlying the banality. But the unease was down deep, and the banality on the surface, and in between lay the middle ground, the area that held their friendship, and the area that was now home to a lingering feeling of things not being quite right, of there being something missing, something not quite...enough. Bodie knew that median well, knew it for the thin ice it was, for all that it seemed so warm and cosy and safe. One step on there, into the barely delineated emotional longings, and he would be falling, sinking in over his head before he could catch his breath.

So instead of pulling Doyle in closer, instead of slipping his arm around Doyle's shoulder and drawing the slender strength into the curve of his embrace, he concentrated on his drink instead, moving on to Newcastle Brown Ale when the lager was finished, contemplating whisky when the beer was gone, watching out of the corner of his eye as Doyle set himself to the task of working his way through a hell of a lot of booze. The television set was decidedly

fuzzy round the edges, and Bodie felt himself slipping into the same dangerous state. Time, then, to leave, and to leave behind both Doyle and the temptation to let himself get really drunk, to give him an excuse to himself for letting go and reaching out to touch Doyle. To touch, and to kiss, and to love... He should leave, he knew he should. But he convinced himself that he could resist the lure of boozey amnesty as excuse for sex and that he could manage to keep the whole evening as simply closeness between friends. Doyle need never know the truth...

Night drawing late, Doyle drawing closer, sleepy curls drooping, fierce face softening into the faintest of smiles to curve the full and inviting lips. And Bodie sat very still, staring at him, whole body aching with the desire to do nothing more daring than cuddle Doyle in close to him, to cherish the wiry strength to him, to keep Doyle all for his own.

Not, wisely, a desire he acted upon. Instead, as limpid green eyes blinked at him, as the somnambulant warmth seeped from Doyle into him, Bodie got to his feet, stretching as if it were nothing more than stiffness from being sat there too long, yawning widely although he was far to involved to be tired. Knowing that the truth of it was that temptation was proving too alluring to be resisted for very much longer, and that if he gave in to his own desire, then this adorably rumpled sweetness blinking at him so unaware would turn into a beast that would bite off the hand that tried to feed it love.

"Best be off, then," Bodie said, pottering around, tidying up even though he knew it was stupid to prolong the moment, but he couldn't bear to leave just immediately, not with Doyle half-sprawled the length of the settee, legs akimbo, standard-lamp pooling light and shadow in the rills of Doyle's jeans. But, Bodie admitted wryly to himself, his small smile of self-deprecation fumbling its way through Doyle's unconscious appeal, it just went to prove how far gone he was: it wasn't even the sex that made him want to linger, it was this rare, sweet mood that had swaddled Doyle.

Bodie had dumped the last of the foil containers and the beer cans into the bin,

was gathering up his jacket and keys when Doyle spoke, speech slightly slurred by the lateness of the hour and the consumption of too many cans of lager.

“You ought to kip here tonight, mate.”

"Driving the way you do, at this time of the night." A ponderous stare at his watch and then, added, "This time of the morning. 'S too late—or too early—for you to hit the streets." A chuckle, somewhat damp and bleary-eyed around the edges. "An' the way you drive, hitting the street's what it'd be, wouldn't it?"

"Yeah, but I'm not sleeping on that bloody settee of yours, so that means I'm going home to my own bed." He wanted to hold his breath, to keep himself entirely still, to wait patiently to find out if Doyle was going to make him an offer he couldn't refuse, even though he most certainly should. Instead, he wandered over to stand in front of Doyle, behaving as he always did. "Unless you're willing to sleep on that lump of springs and give me your bed?"

"Fat chance. I'm being nice to you, not bloody stupid. Nah, you can come in beside me. It's a big bed, you know."

Oh, Bodie knew, he knew! He'd lost count of how many times he'd seen that bed and wondered how the hell to persuade Doyle to let him into it. Now here was Doyle, inviting him to 'come in beside' him, as if they were

both just kids who hadn't discovered what their pricks were for yet. Christ, get into bed beside him, Doyle with nothing on but those stretchy pyjama bottoms he wore, and Bodie himself, suddenly, almost blushingly aware, that he had nothing with him he could sleep in. Nothing but his birthday suit and the future of England carried proudly before him. Bloody insane to even consider it, he told himself, stiffening his resolve, turning away so that he wouldn't have to look at Doyle and thus stood at least some chance of resisting temptation.

"You've gone off again, Bodie," Doyle was saying to him, slurring nonexistent esses, eyes owlish from the drink, mouth incredibly, invitingly soft. "Wish you'd tell me what was wrong, you great prat. Could mend it for you then." Doyle slumped back, abruptly boneless, and Bodie wanted desperately to caress the dimpling crease of Doyle's smile. Before he could, Doyle smirked at him with the delight of the drunk and said, sing-song: "I could make it aaaall better!"

With the traditional kiss? Bodie thought to himself, some memory of his mother surfacing unexpectedly, with her perfume of roses and ample bosom, all of it ensconcing and suffocating to a small boy held close to maternal love. "You, my old chum, are absolutely pissed," he said, sounding perfectly sensible when he wanted to scream in frustration. Trust Doyle to pick tonight to camp it up. In fact, if he hadn't known better, he would have said that drunkenness had given way to sodden seduction. But still, Bodie couldn't help but smile in response to Doyle's beaming face.

"Yeh," Doyle finally got round to saying, "I am. Pissed. Pickled as a newt, that's me." Eyes growing wider, "You'll stay, won't you, Bodie? Won't be able to find me way to bed else."

"Oh, come on, you, I'll see you upstairs." So saying, he bent down, looping Doyle's right arm over his own shoulder, hauling his partner to his very unsteady feet. "That's my lad, up the stairs to Bedfordshire with you. Soon have you tucked in and snoring."

And Bodie didn't actually add out loud: before the drink turns you nasty. Doyle could

be a vicious drunk—Doyle could be vicious sober, for that matter—and Bodie didn't want to be here when that started. He'd had a few too many himself, and he wasn't exactly the village vicar when he got going either. Plus, there was no saying what would happen if he got an attack of the wandering hands and Doyle was sober enough either to remember it in the morning, or notice it in the night.

So he helped Doyle upstairs, his own feet a bit on the unsteady side, but his intentions absolutely rock-solid: Gibraltar had nothing on him. Apart, perhaps, from constancy. At the bedroom door, his intentions were purely virtuous, consisting of getting Doyle safely into bed, all alone, and Bodie himself out of there with his face intact and his balls still attached to his body and not removed by some swift jab of Doyle's vengeful knee. By the time they had got as far as the edge of the bed, all the promises he had made to himself were pretending to be lemmings, leaping off the edge of the bed to plunge, metaphorically speaking, between the sheets.

Doyle, at some stage in the manœuvrings between door and bed and Bodie's attempts to stop him, had removed his clothes and was, quite literally, bollocks naked.

And Bodie, poor Bodie was stuck there, his arms full of naked, squirming Doyle—"I can't get my sock off, Bodie, give us a hand"—and his y-fronts were full of squirming cock, his body happily betraying him in favour of the luscious Doyle. The naked, luscious Doyle. The naked, luscious and—

Couldn't be willing, he thought to himself, trying to disentangle himself from a Doyle who seemed for all the world to be undoing Bodie's shirt buttons. "What're you doing?" Bodie demanded, Liverpudlian docks back full force, his accent freed by his shock—and his fear. "Give over, Doyle, pack it in!"

"No, won't. Can't come to bed with your togs on like that. Get me sheets all mucky."

And he was giggling, Bodie noticed, not the usual filthy chuckle, but an infectious giggle, the way Doyle laughed when he was absolutely plastered. Oh, god, he thought, what did I do to deserve this? There he was, in Doyle's bedroom, with a naked Doyle in his arms, and a very enthusiastic Doyle trying to strip

him off. The very stuff of dreams, apart from the minor detail that Doyle was drunk and had no idea what he was doing.

But even as his mind was rejecting taking advantage of Doyle's drunkenness, Bodie's body was whole-heartedly embracing it, grabbing at the opportunity, cock twitching as his blood pulsed heavily through him.

"C'mon, Bodie, gerrem off! Go on, show us what you've been keepin' covered. Bet you've got a willie the size of me little finger an' that's why you've been so shy. That it, Bodie? Yeh, bet it is."

Bodie shoved him aside, not gently, the probing fingers leaving his zip alone, Doyle collapsing backwards onto the bed, genitals flopping, gales of laughter filling the room.

"William Bodie," Doyle managed between bouts of hysteria. "Little Willie Bodie! That what they call you, eh?"

But before Bodie could stand on his dignity and then retreat in high dudgeon, leaving them to be friends again another day, Doyle stopped laughing and stared at him, eyelids at half-mast, marginally glazed eyes fighting to focus on him.

"But they're wrong, aren't they, sunshine?" Doyle slurred with ponderous seriousness. "An' even if they were right, the whole fuckin' lot of them," an arm waved, encompassing some vague massing of unknown, uncaring strangers, the world out there against the world they had in here, just the two of them, "I wouldn't care, would I? Best fuckin' partner a man ever had, you know that, don't you?" Doyle was saying, maudlin in drink as he always was, and for Bodie, this part of the evening was well worth the price of the booze for getting Doyle into this state.

Affection was a rare crumb from Doyle's table, and Bodie always snaffled it up as voraciously as a dog, but never, absolutely never, letting Doyle see his hunger. "Yeh," he said, smiling in spite of himself, hand ruffling Doyle's hair, "I know that, glad you finally twigged."

"Twigged about something else, you know," Doyle whispered, all wide eyes and slightly wobbly winking. "Somethin' 'bout you, Bodie."

"You did, did you?" and he betrayed, not by action or expression, a single second of his

unease, as his mind effortlessly replayed the incident that morning.

"Oh, yeh," Doyle caroled in uncomplicated glee, "I know something you don't!"

"Well, if it's about me, then 'course I know about it, don't I?"

"Oh no," curls bobbing, Doyle staring at him with the unblinking concentration of the drunk. "You haven't worked it out yet, don't think. You'd've done something if you had, wouldn't you?"

“Dovle—”

"Don't like it when you call me that. Did you know that? Never liked it, 'less we're on the job. Makes me think of other stuff. School, an' the police an' me dad, all that crap."

Looking at that unmasked face, Bodie knew he was sinking, ineluctably, into the morass of his own feelings. It was high time—past time—that he got out of there, with Doyle's virtue and their partnership still intact. "Want me to call you Raymond, do you, then?" he muttered, disappearing off out of the bedroom for a minute, voice rising with the increase in distance. "Or d'you fancy Raymondo?" He was back, not really looking at Doyle now, careful to concentrate instead on the practicalities of a bucket on the floor, glass of water and towel from the kitchen on the bedside cabinet. "Like that better, do you?"

There was a longish pause, and he assumed drunkenness had slid Doyle off to sleep, but just as he relaxed and went to stand up, Doyle spoke again, a small voice, but clear as a bell.

"Prefer pet. Or sunshine, or mate. Like it when you give me nicknames, you see."

Christ, but he had to get out of here! If Bodie stayed, he'd take Doyle up on more than Doyle was probably offering. That was it, he explained to himself, Doyle always turned maudlin and melancholy when he got drunk, the lonely, self-pitying misery interspersed with giggling bridges that only led to more sadness and more confessions. And Doyle was one for reaching out when he was drunk, all his inhibitions removed. Doyle, reaching out to him for love and affection, all the rules thrown out by the drink... The temptation was too much, and he had to run, bolt, else he'd be in that bed with Doyle, fucking him,

and fucking their partnership up permanently. And he knew, had weighed it all up more times than he cared to remember, that a quick tumble, even if it were to satisfy either Doyle's curiosity or Doyle's drunken thirst for affection, wasn't enough to destroy a friendship. For Doyle, after, there would be embarrassment, and regret, and that gnawing feeling of betrayal every time he looked at his so-called best mate who'd taken terrible advantage of him...

Turning away without looking directly at Doyle, a sudden movement caught Bodie's attention, and he turned. There was Doyle, dressed to the nines in his birthday suit, laughing like a drain.

"Just thought of something," Doyle managed through the giggles. "Remember that song?" He laughed again, and then he started singing, voice belting forth with more enthusiasm than musicality, feet and hands and hips keeping up with some inner beat, "Little Willie, Willie won't, go home, and you can't put Willie down, Willie won't go..." Then the giddiness was gone again, Doyle serious, sombre even, with the spurious and intense sobriety that only drunkenness brings. "That happen to you, Bodie? Up it comes, an' then it won't go down. Doesn't matter what you think about, you can't get it to behave itself, and you have to sit there, with everyone lookin' at you an' sniggerin'. Happens to me, all the time, in fact. Doesn't take much to get me started, does it? Anything, really. Or anyone. Sometimes, all it takes is someone wanting me..."

Bright green eyes gazing at him, Doyle's voice coming between Bodie and the few paltry panicky defences he had left. Bodie swallowed, hard, his eyes never leaving Doyle's, the moment turned upon him, and it was then that Bodie saw how inevitable it had all been, from the very second he had first laid eyes upon Doyle. There was, quite abruptly really, no point in fighting it any more; time, at last, to give in, yield, let temptation and love and lust have their sway. How could Bodie not? For whatever reason, Doyle wanted him, or wanted to try a bit of the queer, or simply couldn't face being alone. For now, for the time being. Tomorrow would be different.

Tomorrow would see the return of the pruckles and the hackles, tight expression over tight mouth, Doyle gone all proper on him, maybe not even willing to look at him...

But Doyle was looking at him now. Right now, here, in front of him, naked and beautiful and irresistible. What price Bodie's honour and resolve now? Slowly, Bodie's hand went to his own clothing, beginning to undress himself, to make his body as naked as his eyes, and all the while, Doyle was watching him.

“We’re drunk, Bodie, aren’t we?”

"Oh, very, very drunk, sunshine," Bodie told him, feeding him lies, cocooning him in deceit, keeping him safe. It would be Bodie to bear the blame tomorrow, when all that was left for Doyle was a hangover and the after-effects of sex. But Bodie could take it, because he had always known that he liked men. Never had to fight it, always taken for a macho bastard by dint of looks alone. Nothing for anyone else to use as threat to his own sense of masculinity, unlike Doyle with his curls and his artistic bone structure and grace. Oh, yes, Bodie could bear it.

For Doyle, he could bear anything.

“You’re stayin’ with me, aren’t you, Bodie?”

"For as long as you want me to, mate."

"Like it when you call me that," Doyle told him, tongue tip moistening his lips, the pull of that going straight to Bodie's groin.

"Know you do," he whispered, kicking his shoes off, getting rid of socks and trousers and underwear and shirt, all of them shed as if they were his own misgivings and his own fears of what the repercussions would be.

"Goin' to call me nice things all night?"

"Want me to, pet? Want me to whisper sweet nothings to you? Is that it?"

"Want you to make the loneliness go away. Did you know, Bodie," and the voice was suddenly almost chatty, the eyes blinking slowly, "did you know that I'm always lonely? In here—" a thump to his chest, over the sternum where the heart lies, romantically speaking, "right here, that's where it's always empty. No-one ever gets in there, Bodie. Cept you."

"I won't let you be lonely any more, Ray," he whispered, kneeling on the bed between

Doyle's spread legs, a shiver of arousal going through him as he was able to touch Doyle for the first time, here, and here, where the hair on his chest curled beautifully around the pinkness of nipples.

"We're drunk, Bodie," was all Doyle said, and Bodie left it at that, for it was true—for one of them. He wasn't even close to being as drunk as Doyle, but it was enough, Doyle drunk enough that he would be able to face himself in the morning, Bodie 'relaxed' enough that he could excuse himself to his conscience when that under-used faculty started kicking him awake.

"We're as drunk as you need us to be," Bodie said, closing his eyes and leaning down closer, until he could smell the soap that Doyle used, and the deodorant, and under it all, animal keen and sharp, sweat, and musk, and Doyle. He licked, tentatively, not wanting to push too fast or too far and scare Doyle off. His hand lowered, until he felt the plush of crisp body hair, the flattened curls fluffing up with his caressing, and then the incredible sensation of actually having his hand on Doyle's cock. The experience, generically speaking, was hardly new to him, but this time, it fascinated him, this new texture and new map of veins that was uniquely Doyle. He wanted, so consumingly that he could think of nothing else, to taste him, to suck him in deep and feel the surge of cock down his throat. Slowly, hands careful to stroke and knead and pleasure every available inch of Doyle's skin, he swallowed Doyle down, inch by inch, widening his jaw to accommodate the thickening flesh. The hardness excited him, his own cock rising to press against his inner thigh and the edge of the mattress. He pressed down hard, and groaned in pleasure, the sound reverberating through Doyle, the muscles trembling fine and lean under Bodie's hands.

Bodie withdrew, just far enough to cradle the head of Doyle's cock in his mouth, his tongue teasing the flange, paddling under the foreskin, tracing every sensitive nuance, knowing to the finest detail what Doyle was experiencing. He sucked, hard, pulling Doyle back inside him, letting him go, flickering the tip of his tongue against the small slit, then

sucking Doyle back inside. One hand was massaging the sweet curve of buttock, the other dallying with Doyle's balls, rolling them, squeezing them, thumb coming between to separate them, thrillingly, the suggestion of danger itself showing how much trust there was between them. But still, his next move was made cautiously, wary of turning Doyle off or sobering him up with shock. Bodie danced a finger along the raised rimple of flesh that led so unerringly from balls to arse, beckoning his touch, demanding his caress. He fingered the puckered opening, and Doyle's entire body went suddenly still, and Bodie withdrew, quickly, returning his hand to the mind-numbing massage of Doyle's balls, sucking on his cock with renewed enthusiasm.

There were fingers tangling in Bodie's hair, disarraying both the style and his own equilibrium. He couldn't get over the fact that this was Doyle, his Raymond Doyle, clutching at him, thrusting into his mouth. Couldn't get over it and didn't want to get over it. He never wanted to let Ray go, wanted to hold this precious man inside, to worship him with a carnality of passion made taboo by religion. And he was going to snatch every second's enjoyment he could from this night.

It was obvious that Ray was close to coming, so Bodie slowed his caresses down, bringing Ray back from the peak, stringing him out on a resonating thread of pleasure. Hunching over Doyle, Bodie stretched behind himself, fingering himself, consciously relaxing his anal muscles. He used his left hand to stroke Doyle's cock, tantalising Doyle while he spat into his own hand and used that to whet his arse, spitting again, fingers going inside himself, making himself ready, doing all the work so that all Ray would know was the incredible power of sinking into a yielding body.

Bodie wanted none of the details to be left to Ray, for if they were, then Doyle might lose the hurtling urgency of sex, might slow down enough to think, instead of being slowed down just enough to be held close to the edge of orgasm. Perfectly aware of every inch of his body, Bodie pressed outwards with his sphincter, his fingers sucked in as his body contracted again. Oh, yes, his arse was ready,

as ready as he was. He sucked Doyle into his mouth again, and there was a keening cry of pleasure and the liquid suction of Bodie's lips reluctantly freeing the wet cock. Bodie would have preferred something a bit more lasting than saliva, but he'd been fucked often enough that he wasn't too tight any more, not the way he had been at first. He'd learned, oh, how he had learned to take a man inside.

Bodie was on his knees now, Doyle coming round behind him, both of them carried along by the heat of the moment and the waves of need coursing through them. And for Bodie, the insistent croon of love that was inside. This, having Ray wrapped around him, strong arms banding his chest, hair tickling his back, cock thrusting hard and demanding between his thighs, the slick head of Doyle's cock pressing into his balls, this was what he wanted. This feeling of Doyle encircling him, covering him, possessing him. But Bodie was not yet complete, his own aching loneliness a chasm in his body, a hollowness crying out for Doyle.

A fumbling, a stifled groan, and then it happened: the moist head of Doyle's cock pressing at Bodie, his arse opening so readily, so easily, to the demands of the flesh. Saliva commingled with pre-cum, mixed with experience and yielding love, and Bodie was open wide, Doyle pushing into him, the beautiful cock stretching him with delectable care. There was a flash of pain, but Bodie welcomed even that as a signature of his love being inside him, and then the pain was gone, forgotten, subsumed by the exquisite pleasure of cock against his prostate, of cock filling him, of cock marking him as Doyle's. Doyle's breath was against his neck, he could hear the guttural moans and, with shivering happiness tingling his spine, the words of affection, the endearments uttered by a drink-loosened tongue. A tongue that was laving him now, and a mouth that was nibbling on him, while hands caressed his chest, and sharp hip-bones bruised his arse as Doyle fucked him. Harder and harder, with Bodie pushing back to meet every inward thrust, fucking himself on Doyle's cock, wanting to please Ray beyond all else. He arched his back, letting himself give voice to his pleasure,

allowing himself to surrender to the joy of making Ray happy, his own body alive with the feeling of having Ray inside him.

It was incredible, literally, a dream come true, and Bodie lost himself in it. Nothing existed but him and Doyle, together, become one, Doyle in him, Doyle fucking him, Doyle loving him. For he could tell himself that, with Doyle umbrella-ing him, with Doyle saying those shattering words to him. Love. Words of love coming into Bodie from Doyle's mouth, words and words and words, all of it flooding him, and Doyle was in him, fucking him, cock plundering him, heat inside him. It hit Bodie: Doyle had come, inside him, deep, deep inside him, was collapsing heavy on top of him, cock still clutched in the darkness of Bodie's arse. A hand grabbing Bodie, milking him, Doyle still whispering words to him, hand blurring in perfect motion, cock still inside him, still hard, the slickness of cum melting the heart of him.

Bodie was coming, a stream of pleasure erupting from him, captured by Doyle's long-fingered hand, rubbed into his belly, the aroma of his own musk filling his nostrils. Slow, slow circling caresses on Bodie's belly, Doyle heavy on his back, and then they had collapsed together on the bed, Bodie flat on his stomach, Doyle sprawled beside him, one hand trapped under Bodie. Awareness creeping in on Bodie, and then Doyle was asleep, a limp weight beside Bodie, and Bodie was in limbo, neither awake nor asleep, wholly absorbed with the memorising of this night's pleasure.

And most of all, with this night's words. As Bodie began to fade into sleep, he shifted Doyle into a more comfortable position, then wrapped himself around his partner, reliving words he never expected to hear again. Until the next time they got drunk. Until the next time Doyle could tell himself that they were both too pickled to know what they were doing.

Unless, of course, when Doyle woke up he remembered everything and blamed Bodie. It would be typical of Doyle, to take his own feelings of guilt out on Bodie, and lay all of it at Bodie's feet. But Bodie knew he could take that, had done so, in the past. Bodie could

mind?"

"Only after I got to know you and you corrupted poor little innocent me."

"Innocent! You? Christ, Doyle, you probably winked at the mid-wife."

"Don't be disgusting, Bodie." A glint of a smile, then, "Didn't start any of that till I got my hand up Mary Morrison's skirt at Confirmation."

“You randy old toad!”

"Randy young toad back then. And we'll have none of the old comments now, either. I'm only two years older than you."

"Three, if you start counting straight after your birthday."

"No chance. Two full years as the calendar flies."

They both stopped abruptly, swallowed, lay for a moment looking at each other. It was sinking in, under the banter and the light-heartedness of their usual backchat. Sinking in that last night they had fucked. That last night, they had changed all the rules. Bodie was very serious, fidgeting with the edge of the blanket, then visibly gathering his courage and saying, "I don't want last night to be a one off."

"I should bloody well hope not. It's not everyday we get a chance like this, Bodie."

"Yeh," Bodie agreed. Continued, carefully finding out the parameters of their new relationship, "Won't have to explain about the job to you."

“Or buy me flowers if you have to work late and cancel going out at the last minute.”

"Won't have to come up with an excuse for leaving early when the phone rings."

"Or needing sex hard and fast after a rotten day."

"No," Bodie agreed, smiling, happiness beginning to overwhelm him. Doyle—his

Ray—hadn't been turned off by last night. No, his Ray wanted more, wanted it to be a proper relationship—"if you have to cancel going out," meant dates, meant being together—and by the cat-got-the-cream look of him, Ray'd also thoroughly enjoyed the night before. And 'hard and fast', well, Bodie shouldn't be surprised by that, should he? They both knew what the job could be like, what a man could need afterwards. And that feral masculinity of Doyle's was one of the things that had attracted Bodie most, after the wickedly amused eyes. He feasted his eyes on the vision of Ray lying naked in bed with him, small pink nipples peaked in anticipation, full lips parted in invitation. "Can I ask you something?"

Doyle looked at him steadily.

“Can I kiss you, Ray?”

Doyle grinned at him, left arm snaking up to pull Bodie down to him. "Course you can," Doyle purred at him, mouth opening, tongue coming into Bodie, taking possession of Bodie's mouth, stopping his heart with delight.

There was an elation in Bodie then, at this proof that Doyle wasn't some basically straight bloke flirting with a bit of the bent side of sex: blokes like that didn't kiss like this. Most of them, in fact, didn't kiss at all, for that was the last bastion, the one thing that could be refused, for kissing meant queer and kissing meant affection. Or for Bodie, with Doyle in a bed rumpled from their passion, kissing meant love.

Sighing into Doyle's mouth, Bodie lay down and let his lover lie on top of him. His mouth was filled with Ray Doyle, his senses overflowing with him. And Bodie could never have enough of it. Bodie sighed again, opening his mouth and his legs to Ray Doyle and surrendered completely, ecstatically, to love.