MURPHY'S LAW

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He leaned heavily on the doorbell, old habit and older training making him automatically scan the street, checking out every bit of movement, even if it were only the unthreatening sight of an Old Age Pensioner raising her brolly to castigate the mannerlessness of youth today. The bell was still buzzing like a bee in a bottle, with not a sign of life from inside, which was irritating to say the least. His breath was pluming in the cold air, his feet were getting numb and his neck was decidedly soggy from the rain dripping off the lintel. Ever the personification of patience, he kicked the door. The cat, nestled warm and broody on the inside window-sill, opened one vituperative eye at him, then huffed back to sleep. So he hammered on the door with closed fist. Even the cat ignored him for that. A quick look around to protect his dignity—and to make sure none of the nosey-parker neighbours had reported this violent loony to the local cop shop—and finding himself alone, he bent down, like a child missing his mummy, and shouted through the letterbox. Perhaps 'shout' isn't quite the right word. Perhaps 'bellow' would be closer to the truth.

"All right, all right, I'm coming!" finally came back at him, muffled by door and weather, the wind kicking up and right through Bodie's clothes. "I always said you were a bit wet, Bodie," Murphy said, opening the door to the dripping, scowling man, "but this is ridiculous. Come in, and mind where you drip. Stain this carpet and Cowley'll dock my pay."

"It'll be your own bloody fault. When were you planning to answer the door—Doomsday?"

"Sorry, but nature calls and I was busy answering that instead. Here, get your wet things off and plant yourself on the sofa. Fancy a cuppa—or something a bit more medicinal?"

"Tea—I'll have a proper drink, after." He shed his wet jacket, kicked off shoes and peeled off socks as if he were in his own home. Something on the mantelpiece caught his eye: a piece of shrapnel, obviously tucked quietly in a pocket before Jack from Forensics had arrived yesterday. Lightly, his face dark with the recurrence of thought, Bodie fingered the sharp-edged fragment, turning yesterday's events over and over in his mind as he turned the metal fragment over and over in his hands. "You wouldn't happen to have any of your mum's angel cakes in, would you?"

"Oh-ho, should have known there was a reason you were turning down a drink. Well, you're out of luck, Bodie. But," at the look of comical disappointment that was hurriedly plastered all over Bodie's face, "she did pop over earlier this morning and left me one of her jam rolls." With his trademark quietness, Murphy took the twisted memory from Bodie's hands, dropping it behind the polished wood of his grandparent's wedding photo. He didn't mention the metal, nor the trouble that was crowding into Bodie's eyes, but kept on, breezy as the weather outside, though with none of the sting. "She said if she'd known you were coming over, she'd have brought a dozen, but you'll have to make do with that. And," he said, nudging Bodie over to the sofa, pointing at the high-piled plates lading the coffee table amidst the litter of the Saturday papers and *Radio Times,* "gingerbread and scones and sausage rolls."

"Sausage rolls from your dad's shop? Christ, I wish my dad had been a butcher."

"You wouldn't be saying that if your first Saturday job had been helping your dad clean the carcases out for hanging. Anyway, I used to lie awake at night, wishing my dad had been in the Navy—'a life on the ocean wave'."

"More like escape from Alcatraz in my house, Murph."

Murphy forbore to comment, knowing from past experience that Bodie would tell him what he felt like telling, when he felt it. Only Ray Doyle had the right to push him, to drag blood from a stone and make Bodie talk. Name, rank and serial number was all anyone else got, but Murphy had seen Ray make Bodie spill his guts with nothing more than a particular look. And sometimes, sometimes he envied that intimacy, wished that he had such a vast pool of complete trust at his disposal. Then he would shrug,

and remind himself of the futility of crying over spilt milk and settle down to count his blessings.

"Who d'you fancy for the game this afternoon, then?" Bodie was asking him, clearly demarking the lines of conversation for the day, and Murphy slid with ease into the pleasantry of chat, leaning back against the cushions, enjoying watching Bodie, enjoying listening to his piquant wit—counting his blessings, ignoring the debits.

"…top of the league this season, not without—Bodie?"

"Hmm?"

"Are you listening to me, or are you too busy having fun dissecting that poor biscuit?"

"What? Oh, sorry. Was miles away…"

"In Wapping, by any chance?"

A sharpness of movement, and Bodie was on his feet, stalking behind the couch, staring out the window, twitching the net curtain back. The cat glared at him and he stroked it, his mind elsewhere. His touch matched his thoughts, and the roughness made the cat hiss and swat at him, arching to escape the heavy hand on its back.

"Yesterday really got to you, didn't it?" Murphy said, still lounging on the sofa, used to Bodie, used to his moods and the paths he took to peace.

A convulsive swallow, the tense hunching of shoulders. "And I suppose it didn't get to you? Not Ice-Man Murphy—"

"Don't start, Bodie. You didn't come here for a fight."

The shoulders sagged, Bodie leaning against the wall beside the window, the streaming grey of rain reflecting on his face. "No, don't suppose that's what I ever come here for. But it really got to me, yesterday. Standing there, holding that bloke with my gun at his head, willing those bastards inside to let that family go, knowing they could toss a grenade or a dead kid at me any time they felt like it… His nickname was Wombat, did you know that? He said they called him that because he was always bouncing around, full of energy. He was trembling, Murph, shaking like a leaf, because I had him. I had him and I was pressing my gun into his head—left a big red mark on him, right here…" He tapped his forefinger to his temple, becoming very still as the reliving of the day before grew in him. Restlessness consumed him, until he was pacing around and around the room, fingers rapping the back of the sofa, the sideboard, the hi-fi, always moving, moving, words pouring from him unchecked and uncensored. "And you should've seen the hard-on he got, Murphy. He was huge as well, judging from the way his trousers were sticking out, and he was all-go like that because he thought I was going to kill him. Honestly believed I was going to shoot his brains out. Kept on pleading with me, begging me and begging me, promising me everything under the sun if I wouldn't kill him."

He paused then, back at the window, peering out to examine the day, Murphy sitting silently patient on the settee, hearing him out with neither question nor judgement. "He'd've sold his granny for me, if I'd told him to." Then he was moving again, more measured prowling, each step a deliberately controlled fusion of fight with flight. "You've known me long enough to know what that did to me, Murphy. I couldn't get enough of it. Kept on digging the gun in a bit harder so he'd squirm more. And you should've heard him squeal when I twisted round behind him and let him feel my prick. He hadn't expected that. I mean, it was obvious then that he'd got hard just cos he was that scared. I was scared and all, but I wanted him, Murph. Wanted to fuck him hard right there, in front of everyone, just to show them who's boss. And he'd've *let* me. Even though he was near enough shitting himself, he'd've let me."

Murphy sat quiet as a priest, listening to Bodie's confession, waiting until the spate had abated. They'd been through this before, he and Bodie, had suffered through the maze of emotions, hammering at it time and again until they had found the only two paths out. He picked cat hair off his trousers, giving a single thought of joy to the day his sister came back from her holidays and took the animal back. But it was only a small thought, a pebble of calm in the ripples that were being cast by Bodie's endless movements around the sitting room.

In front of the mantelpiece, Bodie stopped as if rooted, reaching behind the photo to pick up the sharp metal that Murphy had already tried to take from him. "D'you know, when it all went wrong yesterday, the first thing I thought was what a rotten fucking shame it was that I had

to let the Wombat go? That was it, Murphy. Didn't care about the wife and kids inside—not at first. Didn't care about all the innocent bystanders. Wasn't until those pricks lobbed that bloody grenade at us that I even started to think about it again."

The picture of calm, Murphy waited tensely, knowing that this was the moment of truth. Something was coming, as obvious as clouds harbouring rain. So he waited, looking like his usual placid, phlegmatic self, while his heart raced and the breath caught in the back of his throat and the blood pounded in his ears.

"I tried to fuck Ray last night."

Murphy didn't say anything, knowing perfectly well that Bodie was only half-speaking to him, most of the words directed inwards, to explain. To excuse… "He didn't want to, not the way I was after. So I grabbed him. Got a half-Nelson on him, started choking him, talking to him the way I had that poor sod yesterday afternoon. Wanted Ray on his knees to me, licking my boots…"

The breath exploded from Murphy, a great surge of arousal and elation. So that was how it was to be! God, and it was what he wanted most himself, what he needed most himself to cope with yesterday, to stuff all the aggression and war in himself back into the part of his life where it belonged. He felt his own taut-string tension ease, the pose of relaxation becoming more a reality. Apart, of course, from the slow build to the sweet tension of sex. It was going to be good, today. It always was, when Bodie was this wound up and he himself was this afired.

"I really pushed him, so you know our Ray. Kneed me in the balls and told me to go to you and not come back until I'd got myself sorted out again."

Murphy stretched, making the cat twitch with envy. "So Ray sent you to me, did he now?" he said, voice so level and smooth, while his stomach fluttered and his groin tightened, his own darkness rising silken heavy to have its hour in the light. "And what do you expect me to do that he can't?"

Bodie was looking at him now, straight on, no excuses, no lies, no evasions. "You know Ray. Doesn't like any of this kind of stuff, doesn't understand it unless it's someone else and then he can say live and let live. But I need to…" and his voice honeyed, sweet and bitter as dark chocolate, the liquid path to his inner truths, leading Murphy in, using what was to be to illuminate the darkness within, "I need what you give me. Listen, Murph, I dreamt last night that I was back at the siege, except I wasn't me, I was shotgun Tommy. Ray was standing in front of me, right in front of me, closer than you are now, and he was telling me I had to stop, I couldn't kill these people, I couldn't make them do what I wanted them to. He was saying over and over again, don't make me kill you, Bodie, don't make me kill you. He had these tears rolling down his face, big fat tears, but he didn't sound upset, just sounded so sad. He kept on telling me, too, that he was sorry he hadn't been enough for me, apologising for not liking some of the stuff I do. You should've seen his face, when he was standing there, holding his gun on me and wondering if it was his fault I'd got hooked on the violence cos he wouldn't let me do what I need to do elsewhere." The spate of speech had run out, trickling to a halt as the nightmare had. He straightened, blinked, once, slowly, as if to clear his mind not his sight. "I can't give it up, not even for him and he knows if I don't get it from you, I'll end up lying to him and going to one of the clubs and doing it with a stranger. And that's what scares him. It's never going to go beyond where it is with you and me, but… I could lose myself in it if I start going out and doing it again, the way I used to."

Murphy's own voice was seduction itself, rich and mellow, fire flickering. "Need it, do you? After you got a taste of some of it yesterday, you're craving the other, aren't you? Can't get it out of your mind, how it feels?"

"Can't keep it where it belongs any more, Murphy. It's getting out of hand again."

"So you need me," he whispered, so that Bodie had to lean forward to catch every nuance that was sliding in to colour what he was saying. "You need me," he said again, so that Bodie took a step forward, both men staring at each other, barely blinking, never losing focus. Then, the final time for their ritual to be fulfilled—"you need me."

"Yes…" sibilant, low, empty-belly hollow, Bodie answered him.

Very much at ease now, Murphy unfolded himself from the sofa, stretching again, turning

away, not needing to look to see the hunger booming in Bodie's eyes. He closed the curtains, without hurry, switched on the standard lamp so that there was light to see by, but without the harshness of brightness. Still without looking at Bodie, ostentatious in his calm, he returned to the sofa, shoving the coffee table partially aside, settling himself as comfortably as a child waiting to hear a favoured story.

But when he spoke, this was no once-upon-a-time.

"Strip," is what he said.

Bodie sighed: it was begun. Already, he could feel some of the demon aggression slither from his shoulders, the burden easing. It mattered not one whit whether it was the job that made him so addicted to power and its abuses, or if it were that quality already in him that made him so perfect for the job. All that mattered to him right now was the steeliness of Murphy's eyes and the hardness of his cock.

"Yes…" he said again, this time exultant, voice not yet begun the journey his mind had already begun, back to the luxury of submission, where punishment was in exquisite counterbalance to the lure of power. He loved doing this, and had done it many, many times before he had ever heard of CI5. It was only now, as the years grew in number, that he had found that this one aspect of his life made it possible for him to keep the rest of his life in some semblance of order. He had known, on his way over here today, in a car with condensation crying down the windows, that he would submit. It was yin and yang, all over again. With deliberate pleasure, he stripped himself naked, until he was bare and exposed for Murphy to see.

"You're giving me a pain in my neck, Bodie," softly spoken, but with a thrilling bit of iron to them.

Bodie knelt, relishing his rôle in this most serious game of theirs, playing his part with gusto, lowering his eyes, eyelids veiling the gleam of intense pleasure. The carpet was digging at him, hundreds of tiny claws, nylon pile to irritate with small hurts and the draught was sleeking around the edge of the curtains to tickle along his ribs and the rounded sheen of flank.

Murphy remained seated, letting the moment stretch, watching as anticipation made Bodie's cock stretch also, as if the blind head was reaching out for what Bodie had been forbidden to do. It was a pleasure for Murphy, and for Bodie, too, this knowing what was and was not permitted: they had done this for what seemed an age of their souls and now, everything followed one of the two paths they had cleared, with only the details altered. For a time, Murphy contemplated Bodie—the way the light shivered on muscle every time Bodie breathed, the way the hair under his arm peeked out as coy as a maiden, the way the bent head left his nape unprotected, the way his cock was slowly arching up to kiss his belly, without having so much as been touched. The small sound of Murphy crossing his legs was loud in the room and Bodie quivered from even so minute a stimulation. That made Murphy smile. He recrossed his legs, putting his feet up on the coffee table, shoving a cushion behind his head, smile broadening with every tiny noise that made Bodie's body leap with the reined-in need to touch. He checked his watch, let his hand come to rest comfortably on his groin, stroked himself, then watched Bodie strain to hear, for Bodie was his now and not allowed to look, not without express permission. And he wasn't about to give that, not yet. Not quite yet…

For a hundred beats of his heart, all Bodie could hear was his own blood pulse and the faint shh, shh of Murphy's hand on cloth. His neck was aching from resisting the temptation to raise his head and look—just sneak the tiniest of peeks—to find out if Murphy were doing what he thought Murphy was doing. He could picture those hands rubbing on the rising hardness of prick, a sight he'd seen many times—a sight he'd demanded many times, when the path they'd needed was for him to be the one who held the power and the sceptre. He licked his lips, hoping that the insurgence was small enough to escape real punishment, which for him was the denial of Murphy's control, but a large enough rebellion to elicit the sharp sting of hand on his face.

There was only silence.

A ream of his heartbeats, and then his punishment was commuted. There was a sound, solitary, sibilant, lasting forever: the throaty rasp of a zip being undone. He could hear, then, the sounds of hand seeking flesh, then of skin on skin. A moist sound, and with reflexive jealousy,

Bodie swallowed: that wetness had been Murphy spitting, to whet his hand and thus, his cock. It would be wet now and if Bodie closed his eyes, he could see it in his mind, all aglister like rain on glass. His mouth was watering, his libido drooling, and all he could do was wait. And wait.

Then, finally—

"Into the bedroom." The voice was hard now, and Bodie, of course, correlated it to the hardness that would be standing, prowlike, from Murphy's body. With a hunger that was abruptly dizzying, he wanted that cock in him, slamming into him, making him submit, taking all the power away from him. Deliver us from temptation, he thought, not in the slightest bit religious, God having died in his eyes many, many years before, but rather, the sarcastic bite at piety and at the multitudinous faiths that had been unable to offer him either shelter or answer. Most of them couldn't even cope with his questions, and he had turned on them with bitter fatalism, brooding off in another direction to find some answers there.

"I said," one of his answers snapped at him, "into the bedroom."

On his knees, head still lowered, he shuffled forward, the carpet scraping his knees, stinging at them like gravel path on grubby boy.

"That's too slow, my lovely, and I'm in a hurry today. On your feet. Let me see that pretty arse of yours."

A *frisson* of pleasure and he was obeying, consciously emphasising the roll and sway of muscle, harking back to his early days at sea when first he'd learned how to go with the yaw and buck of life. In the bedroom he stopped, a pool of absolute serenity as he waited to be told what to do. He didn't even have to think, for that would be done for him, too, every last burden removed from his shoulders.

"Suck me," Murphy said, legs akimbo, a Colossus standing astride the gulf that separated the average person from those, like him, who had more…specialised tastes. The helplessness he had been swamped by yesterday was being secreted from his pores as the power seeped in through the soles of his feet. The heat in him was rising, charging him up, as he siphoned off the tyranny that was struggling to enthrone itself in Bodie. Very deliberately, relishing every second, he set about taking everything from Bodie, turning him into nothing more than a creature to be commanded for his sexual whims. With that thought, his cock pulsed, the slit dripping a drop of pre-cum, the translucent pearl hanging there for Bodie to lap up.

The first touch of tongue on his cock head made him arch his back, letting his head loll back so that the muscles of his neck crunched with the sudden outflow of tension. It wasn't just tongue on him now, but lips, then mouth, the polished marble of teeth, the limber strength of tongue pressing at the nexus of nerves on the underside of his prick. He allowed himself not so much as a whimper of satisfaction, withholding that approval from his acolyte, although the mouth sucking him was perfect in its skill. He thrust forward into the wetness, fucking Bodie's face, opening his eyes to look down and see it: Bodie, on his knees before him, face pressed into his groin, the rose of his cock being sucked into the tight-O of mouth. He thrust again, and felt the satisfying spasm of throat as Bodie gagged and saw the even more satisfying sight of Bodie closing his eyes in purest delight. His hands were large and steady as they came round to hold Bodie's head in close, keeping him there, fucking him harder, again and again, deeper and deeper, taking him to the very edge of choking and only then, only when breath was cut off, did he pull back. He grinned, feral and brutish, feeding on this, revelling in the knowledge that Bodie couldn't even breathe without his permission.

Nostrils inundated with the languorous musk of Murphy's groin, Bodie let his throat and his will relax, letting go of the last vestiges of pride that made him his own master. He tried to follow his new master's dictates, swallowing as far as he could, opening up as much as he could, loving the feel of cock banging against the back of his throat as he gagged. Of a sudden, he felt the panic come into him, shaking his bones, his breath cut off by the bigness of the prick in him, and he struggled, pushing back against the hands…

Which were implacable, holding him still, not allowing him to move. Black pubic hair was rustling against his face, skin was whispering against his, and the hands wouldn't let him go, the cock wouldn't let him breathe. He fought it, his own hands coming up to shove against

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denim-clad thighs. The hands on his head knotted in his hair, bringing a rain of pain to his eyes. Warning, then, reminder that this was for real, this was no holds barred.

"I told you to suck me," filled his ears, command tone, ringing out, drill-sergeant loud.

"Yes, sir," he mumbled more in his mind than aloud. He opened his mouth wider, closed his eyes tighter, searched blindly for that place inside himself where the hunger to control was banned. He struggled to breathe, to swallow, to obey, sweat clouding his skin. And then, without warning, he was there, without subterfuge, without self-deceit, without the vanity of pride hiding behind his submission. He was at peace, and he was in Murphy's hands, and Murphy knew what he wanted him to do. He could take him in now, without effort, now that the last vestige of resistance had fled, and he flowed with the movement of Murphy's hands, allowing himself to be moved this way and that, allowing the movement of Murphy's hands to control his ability to breathe. There were groans of pleasure trapped in his throat, waiting for his Master to give him permission to show his enjoyment and to pay his homage of arousal.

He was jerked away, left to kneel, swaying, a leaf in the wind. Perfectly still, he awaited his Master's pleasure.

"On your feet," he heard again. "Strip me."

Murphy stood pliant, neither hindering nor helping as Bodie, with eyes downcast, carefully denuded him, He indulged the smaller man, letting him steal his little would-be secret caresses, allowing him this small infringement of the rules. He could afford to be generous, knowing, as he did, what was to come later. He put his hand on Bodie's bent head, using that as his anchor while each foot was lifted in turn, sock and shoe removed, then lifted again as trousers and underpants were slipped from him. With Bodie doglike at his feet again, he sat himself down on the edge of the bed, taking his time, for all his cock was shouting at him to hurry.

One hand on the back of Bodie's neck, and he was on all fours, licking and kissing Murphy's feet, doing to him what he had tried to—figuratively, or literally, it mattered not here—to get Ray to do the night before, when he was hot from the near kill. He gave it all his attention, rejoicing in the yielding of power and in the sensation of skin soft against his tongue. If he bowed his back, if he twisted a little, then the floor was hard against his cock, rough pile scraping back the delicacy of foreskin. He couldn't keep it in, had to let some of the pleasure out or he would surely burst. A groan bubbled up from him, getting louder, rising in pitch until it was almost words. Then his cock jolted with the sudden snapping influx of pleasure.

The sound was beyond what was permitted. Bodie knew he was supposed to be quiet until freed from the yoke of silence, so Murphy lifted his hand and brought it down with a satisfying crack, slapping Bodie full across the small of his back. His handprint glowed on the alabaster skin and the sweetness of pain glowed on Bodie's face. Murphy reached out, sliding his hand caressingly the length of knotted spine, until his fingertips came to the rising warmth of where that same hand had landed. Yes, he whispered to himself, oh yes, this was what they both wanted… Bodie was squirming at his feet, arching to get Murphy to touch the reddened area again, licking frantically at him, begging for attention.

"What do you want?" Murphy asked, not giving him a name.

"You, Master," Bodie answered, not permitted to use his name.

"Do you want me to fuck you?"

Another groan, then Bodie answered when spoken to, as he was supposed to. "Yes, Master. I want you to fuck me, hard."

"Why should I do something so nice to a cunt like you?"

Murphy didn't give him a chance to speak, grabbing him by the hair, hauling him forward until Bodie's mouth was open and sucking in his cock again. Taller, with longer reach, Murphy could still grab at Bodie's arse, spanking him hard, first the curved whiteness of the right, then the left, again and again until all the white was gone and all that remained was the mark of his hands. All the while Bodie sucked him, slurping at him as if he had been a man lost in the desert suddenly festooned with oasis. Murphy smoothed his palms over the flesh that now belonged to him, bearing his sigil as it did, gentle in his possessiveness. And felt the scrape of teeth, where no such liberty had been granted. He raised both hands and brought them down

with a resounding smack, the shock of it coursing through Bodie, out of his mouth and back into Murphy. Who recognised the shiver of spine for what it portended.

"I haven't told you you can come yet," he said, voice deceptively soft.

Bodie went very still, holding his body absolutely quiet, fighting desperately not to come, to let the sensation ease back, to give control back over to Murphy, to let Murphy make the decision, take the responsibility… He even stopped sucking, suffered to draw his head back from the cock pulsing against his tongue. Great gulping breaths, eyes closed, not looking at the handsome body in front of him, and it still wasn't enough to completely rescind the threat of orgasm.

"Stand up."

He stood, grateful for not having to think. A hand on his cock, and he grinned, thinking that his mouth must have pleased his Master that he was going to be allowed to come more than once this night. But the hand on him did not caress, did not offer surcease. It tightened on him, tightened and tightened, the vice squeezing droplets out of his enpurpling cock, pain radiating out. He could feel every individual finger, the pinkie ring, the callus of the trigger finger. Could feel, also, the pain making his body once more subservient to his Master's will, thus pushing away his own insidious lust for tyranny over others. His scrote was stretched and tugged down away from his body. It wanted to pull up tight and cosy, but was dragged away, hard and hurting. He gasped when his balls were twisted, up and over until they were pressed into the firmness of his abdomen, the heel of his master's hand digging into the upper side of his cock. The pain was climbing, an Everest of sensation, until it was all he knew in the world.

And he thought he would die from it, it felt so good.

Murphy was controlling Bodie with ease, but he was struggling to control himself. His cock was insisting on being heard, weeping and wailing that it wanted to be buried in flesh. And he couldn't keep his eyes off the flesh in front of him. But another minute, or two, make it last, prolong it, prove that he was in complete command of every fragment of this situation, and of his life. Excise the gut-churning helplessness of the day before with this perfect omnipotence.

Bodie had nothing in him that could express what it felt like, so he kept silent, obedient, while his Master rose with self-contained grace and then lowered himself, with that same elegance that denied the heated rutting of what they were doing, to crouch beside Bodie. Not kneeling, Bodie noted with relief; his Master wouldn't kneel at times like these when they were taking this path to returning the addiction to despotism back to the small corner where it would reside, seething and snarling, but obstreperously quiescent. His mouth sagged open in empathy with his Master's, joining them intangibly, as if he were doing this to his Master as his Master did to him. Do unto others, indeed. "Oh, god," he said, invoking no deity, only singing praise to this man who was cascading pleasure through him, "oh, god…"

The words were caress in and of themselves, adding to his delight, making the act worthwhile regardless of its own intrinsic appeal. Murphy rasped his cheek along the distended silken skin, his fist still clenched around the fragility of balls. He took particular care with the head of the prick, using his teeth—with just the right amount of dangerous pleasure—to peel the foreskin back, smiling to himself as the crested glans conspired with him to hold the whispering skin back in its place. The small slit was exposed now, and despite all the conventions to the opposite, it was this that was the most carefully guarded part of the male body. The arse, now, that was easy enough to gain, he thought, for as he well knew, once the initial fear of penetration was overcome, there was satisfaction and completion and the undeniable ecstasy that being fucked brought. After all, as he had argued to more than one nervous novitiate, if they weren't meant to fuck, why was the prostate stuck right there, where the only way to get at it was to fuck with cock or fingers—or toys, but he was always slow to mention those to the skittish. But this pert little slit, so small, in such common and frequent use, exposed so casually in public toilets, this was the one part that was truly guarded. Atavistic fear ruled a man's cock, his animal instinctive fear of being unmanned, of being made less. It was always, to Murphy, the ultimate test of trust, this vulnerability of exposed prick. He blew, very gently, on the purple-pink head, contemplating it, consider-

ing what it meant to another man, taking his decision with care. Yes. Again, it was yes. He'd do it today, although this was not something they did often and it was not something that Bodie liked. But it was something he himself needed and Bodie was his to do with completely as he willed. Slowly, he lapped the hot flesh, aware with peripheral acuity of the rippling pleasure marbling Bodie's belly. Then, equally slowly, he brought the tip of his tongue to that slit, and pressed against it, feeling the minuscule parting of flesh. He pressed harder, at this most secret part of Bodie, then pursed his lips against it. A few drops of his saliva flowed from his mouth onto Bodie, so he withdrew to watch as part of him seeped out over distended flesh and to watch, bright-eyed, as a few cells of himself were absorbed inside. He glanced up then, catching sight of the almost-horror on Bodie's face, understanding perfectly well that this was on the razor's edge for the other man and he grinned, letting Bodie see it, reminding Bodie of who was Master here. He knew, having seen that look in Bodie's eyes, what was the next barrier to self-knowledge. In a few months, perhaps, when they had need to, when they had worked a little closer to it, it would be time to introduce some of the…refinements he had been reading about. But for now, there was the moment, and Bodie, both so taut he could almost hear sinews sing.

"On the bed," he said, for his own sake, not sparing an ounce of pity for Bodie who was almost at the end of his tether, dragged there by both arousal and the sting of fear that Murphy had introduced. He knew that fear himself, that anticipatory dreadfilled pleasure of the next new discipline. He toyed with the idea, while he absently toyed with Bodie's cock and balls, tugging nice and hard, but finally rejected it. It could wait, and be all the better for it, once they had played all the little games of mind and flesh that would bring them there as inexorably as time brings death.

Assiduously obedient, Bodie got himself onto the bed, careful not to disturb his Master's grip on him, sly enough to move so that the pressure was increased until the agony became the sweetest of pleasures. He knelt on the bed, awaiting his Master's voice, tingling with the wonder of whether he would be taken on his knees like a dog or on his back like a slave. The images crowded his mind and his body, until he was hard-pressed to remain still and silent, the only thing keeping him properly subdued the dread of his Master's punishment. He couldn't bear it if He were to deny him now, if He were to make him sit, gagged and unfulfilled, while his Master jerked off in front of him, spilling all his manhood, keeping it from Bodie, rejecting Bodie's need for final submission. It was only seconds, but his body and his need insisted that it was hours before his Master had chosen.

"On your back."

His cock was released, interrupted blood flow bludgeoning back to normal, suddenly cold where his Master no longer held him safe. With alacrity, he lay on his back, hooking his arms behind his knees, lifting himself up to lay his arsehole open to his Master's vision. He stretched a little more, contorting himself until he could reach his own arse and spread it wide, so that his Master could see inside him, all the way inside him, to all his truths. A single finger, sure, strong, shoving inside him, sliding on the suppositoried lubricant he had put in himself before getting in his car to come here. The intrusion of real-time memory was jarring, shocking him, reminding him beyond the pleasure, of why he was here, like this, with Murphy looming over him. Murphy, one of the few men he could ever trust, the only man he could trust with him. The only other empathetic soul who shared this sunless need of his. The finger was pulled from him and a harsh smack stung the overly sensitive arsehole, a none-too-gentle reminder to keep his mind in the gutter and be slave, not thinking man. They weren't here to think, only feel, to stuff the visceral aggression back into the unlit corners.

"That's better," Murphy said, seeing the self-will fleeing Bodie's body, "that's much better. I'll forgive you, this time, but if you ever do that again, I shan't fuck you after." He slid two fingers in this time, without warning, scissoring them round the gland suspended inside. He pressed, twisted a fraction, and watched with the fierce pleasure of possession, the jump and leap of Bodie's cock. He could control even that, now, as he had controlled breath and dominated will. A third finger, to stretch anxious flesh, then a fourth. He thought, for a moment, about us-

ing his fist, but that wasn't what he needed today. No, today he needed to fuck Bodie, plunge into him without mercy, let himself flow from his body and into someone else. "On your knees."

Bodie obeyed him, clambering round quickly, presenting himself like a bitch on heat. "Oh, very pretty," Murphy praised. "Pretty enough to be fucked. Is that what you want, bitch?"

"Yes, sir," Bodie said, all hoarseness and passion. "Yes, please, sir, fuck me…"

There were hands grabbing him, hard fingers digging into him and then Bodie let out a scream of pleasure as a hard cock dug into him in a different way, piercing flesh, routing him, rutting him like an animal. He thrust back upwards, was rewarded with a painful smack on his right cheek, so he thrust again, turning the other cheek, again gaining his reward. He was moaning now, careless, heedless of how he sounded, existing only as a body being plundered by his Master. Will-less, pliant, he was moved, the invading cock huge and hot and overbearing inside him. "I'm going to come," he whispered, hoping his Master wouldn't hear, so that he would be allowed to come with Him inside.

"No, you're not," his Master told him, implacable. "I haven't given you permission, yet. Who owns you, bastard?"

"You do, Master."

"Who dictates your body?"

"You do, Master."

"Then you'll come when I tell you and not before."

He could feel the sharp jut of hips cutting into him and the frantic need of his body to come, but he knew he wouldn't. After all, he couldn't, his Master wouldn't let him. At this moment, it never occurred to him to wonder at his body's obedience, for there was no reason to wonder. All there was was his Master's will and that was not to be disputed. He drowned himself in sensation: the sting of hand on his arse, the club of flesh distending his own, the peak of pleasure standing hard and arching at his groin. He could hear his Master, the panting breaths, the coarse words, the faintest sound when his Master's teeth fastened on his shoulder, giving him one more radiating home of pleasure. His hips were gripped now, the stroking inside him erratic now, bespeaking what was about to happen.

There! Over him, canopying him, he felt the sudden stillness of his Master's straining body, and inside him he could feel the sudden convulsive movement of his Master's cock, bucking, seed erupting to overflow within. And still he could not come, and although his mind felt the orgasmic rush, his body still cleaved to his Master's will.

"All right," breathless, but never weak, the command was given. "Up on your knees, facing me. Let me see you come."

Asprawl on the bed, his cock limp with pleasure and wet with his own cum, Murphy lay back and watched the incredible beauty of Bodie, kneeling, hand blurring on his cock, face blurring with passion.

"Look at me," he said, wanting to have that pleasure to devour for himself, "look at me." Dark blue eyes opened, pupils wildly dilated, staring at him, the gyring pleasure spiralling into him from Bodie. He played with his own nipples, faint echoing sweetness, as Bodie's fist pumped hard and fast until a loud groan burst forth, in synchronicity with the first burst of semen that landed, still inner-body hot, on Murphy's belly. He dappled his fingers in it, lifting the streamers to his mouth to taste, lingering over it with lowered lids, appreciating the sight of Bodie coming down off his high. Arms open, he brought the smaller man into his embrace, cradling him until the intensity of feeling had passed. Satisfied, body and soul both sated, he allowed them to drift off into sleep.

When he woke from his quick sleep, he was alone, as usual. He got up from the Gordian knot mess of a bed, loping into the bathroom, cleaning himself up, checking his arse for the unlikelihood of damage, wincing as he peed, the slight abrasion of his cock a welcome reminder of the afternoon's activities. He rubbed his hand, roughly, over his cock, smiling at the memory of what Murphy had done. It was all right, now that they were finished, to fantasize about it in a small way. He wondered, briefly, if that kind of cock-play was what Murphy had in mind for them, then shrugged. He'd find that out, sooner or later, depending on what the job and life threw at them. A quick shower, to wash off the sweat

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and the cum and let him subdue the recalcitrant waviness of his hair. His clothes were, of course, neatly piled on the clothes hamper, his watch topmost, shoes on the bottom. As he dressed, a catch of button here, a rasp of fabric there, brought it all back, residual aches—or for him, pleasures—to be clutched fiercely to him, a child with his beloved teddy. He took the time to shave, using the bottle of his after-shave that he left there. It was funny: Ray knew what they did, recognised the necessity of it, accepted it as payment for his guilt at not being able to give Bodie everything he needed, but still hated it if Bodie came home smelling of Murphy. Hence, one bleakly bitter Thursday night, on his way out the door, there had been a small package stuffed into his pocket and a small kiss just there, at the corner of his mouth, and that had been both Doyle's benediction and confession.

In the living room, the telly was on, football crowd roaring, Murphy sprawled over the settee, the supposedly hated cat purring on his lap. "Finally surfaced, did you? There's a drink poured for you."

"Ta much. Who's winning?"

"Who d'you think? And by a mile. I think the bloody ref's on their side. Look at that! How could he say that was offside? That goal should've stood…"

Bodie took his drink up, reclining into a chair, aware with every cell of his being just how utterly at peace he was. In a half-hour it would be time to be on his way, else he'd be late for going to the pictures with Ray, but he still had time enough to wrangle with cheerful venality. "Goal? It wouldn't even have come close if your bloke hadn't been offside. That bunch play football like my granny—and she's been dead ten years. Look at them, right bunch of wallies…"

"What do you know? You can't see beyond bloody Liverpool. Just because you're a Scouse…"

They settled in for the rest of the match, Bodie letting time slide, hanging on another minute, just to see what would happen in the last minutes of overtime, staying on for the sudden-death penalties, letting out a yell when he realised the time.

"Christ, I'd better get my skates on, Murph. I'm supposed to be at Ray's in twenty minutes."

"If you get another ticket, the old man'll kill you."

"Yeah, well you can send flowers to my funeral, cos if I'm late, Ray'll beat him to it."

A flurry of bustling haste, car keys found, coat grabbed up and shrugged on and then he was at the door, racing out. At the last moment, he turned, leaning into Murphy, kissing him briefly.

"Thanks, mate," was all he said, all that needed said. And then he was gone.

Closing the door quietly, Murphy tidied away the evidence of their tea and drinks, then went into the bedroom to tidy away the evidence of their sex. Putting the spare sheets on, he was humming to himself. He was, he told himself, content with their arrangement. It would, he reminded himself, only spoil everything if they tried to make it an arrangement that was the central core of their life. Bodie, he reiterated, only needed this kind of thing sometimes, when loving Ray and being loved by Ray wasn't enough to quiet the dragons of his soul. It really would wreck it, he repeated to himself, all the while going round his house with outward placidity, clearing away every atom that could betray Bodie's presence here.

"It's for the best," he said out loud, meaning it.

All the same, that night, he had to be drunk before he could get into that bed alone…