







ous, filling him with dread. They'd never mentioned sex between them before. That wasn't to say that they hadn't talked about sex: it would be an unnatural situation indeed for two such puerilely, prurient natures not to discuss sex, and at length, but they'd never mentioned sex that had anything to do with them, together, doing sex together, or feeling anything sexual. And the dread was abruptly settling on Bodie's shoulders, the dread that Doyle knew precisely what was behind all the matey questions and dirty jokes and camping. Typical of Doyle, though, to pick an evening of light-hearted fun to hit him between the eyes with this seriousness, this ripping open of the shroud he used to hide what was going on behind his ever-so-butch façade. He ground his teeth together, preparing himself for the worst, readying his denials and his jokes and all the things he could use to deflect Ray and keep them together. His palms were wet, his upper lip beaded with the cold dampness of fear, a trickle of sweat tickling its way down the valley of his shoulder-blades.

"Harmless fun? That kind of harmless fun could get you shoved up against a wall and raped in a dozen pubs in London, mate. You ought to be careful what you do, you know, Bodie."

And the voice was nearer, harder, colder, carrying a threat like the snow clouds that had loured over the city, all the playfulness fled, deathly seriousness oppressing him. Frantically, Bodie cast around for a joke, a smart alec comment, anything that could get them back to matey companionability, but Doyle was still going, not giving him a chance, bulldozing him.

"D'you know why you ought to be careful what you do, Bodie? Cos if you don't, you could get yourself in a lot of trouble. You could give a bloke the idea that you're coming on heavy with him, and he might not like that. Might even put your prick—" a hand, flashing white in the lamplight, clamping down around his cock, pressing the black fabric in and around him, fingers moving until his balls were caught up in the strong grip—"in a sling for you, mightn't he? Or," hard, lethal knee coming to press between his thighs, threatening gelding and pain, "he might," sudden move of the hand, the grip loosening, fingers cupping, volte-facing the atmosphere with dizzying speed, sitting room become seraglio, "take you up on what he sees as an offer,

mightn't he? And what," voice gone soft, far softer than Bodie's prick, "would you do," breath brushing his lips, pink flicker of tongue "then? Eh, Bodie?"

Staring at the mouth so close to his own, his nerves a-jangle, Bodie moistened his own lips. And found his tongue touching Ray's. His mouth fell open to let his groan of needing out, letting Ray invade his body, letting them fall easily into a kiss that was hard and demanding. He was making noises, he knew, the kind of sounds that would be embarrassing in the light of day—but this was hardly the light of day. This was nighttime, with its veils and secrets and permissive indulgence. This was fantasy, not reality, for in reality it could never be so simple. Ray—confronting him for his passions, his ill-disguised passions, bringing what he had believed to be secrets out to be aired like so much dirty linen? And then doing nothing less than kissing him, wanting him, coming to him without a word of condemnation for his lust-filled deceits? Oh, no, this could not be his reality. And if it were reality, then death would be a minor sting compared to the pain of rejection that was sure to follow. For Ray to be accepting him like this, seeking him out like this, tongue delving into his mouth like this, oh, this would have to be one of Ray's infamous revenges, that cruel streak of his tied up in the pretty ribbon of desire only to hide the barbed noose that awaited behind. Yes, that would be it. That would be how his Ray would do it, this man who had never once forgotten an enemy, had never once forgotten who owed him, and for what reason. Ray would never let him off so easily. It had to be a trick to top the tricks he had played these past few months, with his pretence of 'just good mates' messing about. His mind was reeling, but his body had no such uncertainty, hands groping under fabric to find the subtlety of skin and the voluptuousness of nipple rising from the warmth of hair. Doyle wriggled, and his lap was suddenly overflowing with the heat of a body, all arms and legs and kisses, covering him, enveloping him.

Ensnaring him.

Setting him up for the kill, trapping him into making the final move, the one that would declare him as more than merely curious or randy. The one that would declaim him lover. There wasn't even the faintest echo of their humour

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