

## The Hotline

by Cassie Ingaben

(sequel to *Desperately Seeking Agents*)

"NO!"

"YES!"

"NO!"

"YES!"

Bodie hit his forehead with his spread hand—"I can't believe we are *actually* arguing over this..." Then he started to laugh at the fair imitation of his own pout that Doyle was making. "OK you can call the Hot Line if you want—but NOT from this phone! Use a public, *untapped* one..."

"Doyle showed him his tongue.

"Spoilsport!"

Bodie sighed. It got worse all the time... What a way of spending the holiday seasons! First all the weeks spent in "conference" with Lander and the others, arguing to the death over the latest stupid idea of MI5; then all the flak he got from the Minister when his opinion was put into the minority; then MI6 got themselves caught red-handed spying the EEC "fellow" countries—that had earned them all a special place in the gutter press of the whole continent for being bad bad bad. If he read one more headline about the Whitehall James Bonds he was going to scream! Then all the work they had to do to patch up, and above all prevent the press from finding out that the EEC "fellow" countries had been spying us all along—of course. What the else they expected, Bodie wondered—the EEC version of creampuffs? He let his mind be side-tracked briefly but deliciously by a vision of *Sachertorte*, *Profiteroles*, *Tiramisu* and *Baklava* in a line, all coming over to spy them... *sigh*. It was hardest to keep a diet over the Holidays, Doyle made a mean Christmas pudding...

Bodie blinked, realising Doyle was looking at him with an interrogative air: "What are you thinking about, Bodie? You look wistful."

"Ehr, well ... Just thinking back to these last weeks. It's been hell at work—it seems like all I do is cleaning up after MI5 and MI6 ..."

"I always thought they needed a keeper" sniggered Doyle, getting up from the sofa and unobtrusively walking nearer and nearer the phone.

"Back off that phone, Doyle..." warned Bodie, not distracted enough by his train of thought not to notice Doyle's wandering path.

"Oh, Bodie, where is your sense of humour? You used to be the meanest practical joker ..."

"Not when I would end up crucified by my own joke, mate!"

"You don't have to talk or anything - I'll do it..."

"So what do you need me for?"

"Moral support ... and Lander's private number?" Doyle smiled as seductively as he could, twisting himself up in order to improve on his patented *Sensual Sprawl Against the Wall*.

Bodie sighed theatrically : "You only love me for my body and my address book! And guess how long it will take them to find out how that particular number got around..."

"Ah, cum'on, Bodie - they couldn't find their way out of a paper bag! Besides, if you don't give me that number I will make a painting out of those pictures of you -"

"You don't dare!" Spluttered Bodie, growing red.

Fast to prey on anyone's weaknesses, Doyle crowed: "You are becoming all red! Quite pretty..."—he added hastily as Bodie went puce and started stalking toward him, then realised he was only compounding the offence and tried a diversionary manoeuvre. He pounced and grabbed Bodie in a constrictor hug. They ended up on the sofa in a tangle of limbs, making wet noises. In a few

minutes, cleverly employing the technique known as sexual blackmail, Doyle got the desired number.

Some time later, as Bodie lay sleeping on the sofa, soot-coloured lashes on alabaster skin, a satisfied smile and very few remaining clothes, Doyle tiptoed surreptitiously to the phone, lifted it circumspectly and dialled stealthily. After very few rings, a voice answered.

"Hello. Lander here."

Doyle panted in the headpiece: "Hello, is this the MI5 Hot Line? I want to talk to a hot spy hunk full of spunk and secrets... Tell me everything, babe ... make me know it all..."

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*This is the sequel to "Desperately Seeking Agents", still incorporating current events.*

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