

Desperately Seeking Agents by Cassie Ingaben

As CI5 Controller W.A.P. Bodie opened the door to his house, and fumbled for the light switch, he was attacked by a quick-moving and able opponent and wrestled to the floor.

"Gotcha!"

"Ooof, Ray you moron, get off me, I'm tired and it's late..."

"You are growing old, my son"

"May I remind you I am two years younger than you?"

Doyle got up and helped Bodie pick himself off the floor, while he switched the light on. "Touche. Oh, by the way, remind me I have something *very* funny to show you—after dinner, of course. Lasagna is ready."

"Funny like, you sold another splotch of paint for a ridiculous price?"

"Nah, that's not funny, that's normal" Doyle grinned. "As long as you don't find out how I hypnotise the Japanese buyers into smuggling in shipments of tamagotchis for the black market in exchange for my 'splotches'."

"That would be MI6's work, not mine! - unless they run out of James Bonds, that is"

Doyle started to laugh *really* loudly, folding over a kitchen chair. "Oh, don't worry – they won't!"

Mildly puzzled, Bodie raised an eyebrow and took out the plates, then the steaming lasagna from the microwave. It looked good.

"So, what was so funny?" asked Bodie after he was comfortably seated on the sofa, a glass of scotch on his hand, the other arm round Doyle's shoulder, the 10 o'clock news on TV. Doyle chuckled, and rustled about for the *Guardian*,

finally finding the section he had folded apart.

"If you can bring yourself to read a pinko paper, there it is," Doyle produced with a flourish. "If you knew and didn't tell me, you are dead; if you didn't know, it's time for your refresher."

Bodie grabbed the page and, rather than search for his glasses, put his nose to it to read. A guffaw first came out from behind the newspaper, then other strangled sounds, and finally explosive, spluttering laughter; fearing for the glass of scotch, Doyle just managed to catch it as it fell from Bodie's hold.

"They were *serious*, they were bloody *serious*!" Bodie finally exhaled in a still-strangled tone—"Desperately Seeking MI5 agents... My God, Lander has really cracked up this time!"

Doyle's face grew ominous: "They were serious? You mean you *knew*? You knew and didn't tell *me*?"

Bodie shook his head, still speechless. "I talked to Lander last month, and he said they were so worried about the drop in employment that they were thinking of advertising, and asked if I'd had ever considered it—I basically laughed in his face, ever so poshly of course, and I told them that people don't look for to us, we find them." He smiled reminiscingly. "Anyway, I thought he wouldn't do it. And here they are. Uhm, I should have been more intimidating..."

"Intimidating? You should have shot him and then blamed the new electronic security setup!"

Bodie shrugged. "MI5 is going to seed, anyway – an *ad* on the paper!" he smiled at Doyle, innocently—"and they also chose *The Guardian*! I'll tell Blair next time I see him..."

Doyle made a sour face. "Don't remind me of the price of victory, will you?" He peered at the newspaper again. "They sure have a way of putting things, though—'create waves and prevent repercussions ... extract yourself from less promising circumstances ... Security

threats never conform to neat routines...!"

The counterpoint of giggles from both men soon led to a tickling fight, then to more seriously exciting activities. At some point, among wriggling limbs and gasping sounds, Doyle's head peeked up, eyes shining with mischief, and he said: "Bodie, wouldn't it be fun if I replied to their ad? Retired homosexual CI5 ex-member, next of kin Controller Bodie— OUCH!"

Bodie's hands grabbed a handful of silvery curls and pulled them down strongly, ignoring the outraged yelp coming from Doyle. "Try that and next thing you know, both you and Lander will be found floating in the Thames - my new security setup can be *very* defective...."

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This light vignette was inspired by a discussion on CI5 of a probable Professionals remake featuring Lewis Collins (it didn't happen, eventually) and also by the real item of news that MI6 had been running a series of recruitment ads on the British press.

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