



Time for a little more seriousness. One of the delights of Sebastian's work is her amazing knack of creating natural sounding dialogue. Read her Bodie and Doyle in this story and relish their banter. Our boys leap off the page and the reader suspects that yes, this is very likely what happened after Ojuka...

How would you feel if you'd let them get 'im?" Bodie demanded of his boss, who regarded him for a moment, following the line of his gaze, then turned away without a flicker.

"Oh, I think he'd have borne up quite well," Doyle muttered sourly, looking down at his wrists. "I screwed that up, in one big way, and *don't* tell me 'e 'asn't noticed."

"Look mate, you shot like an angel back there." Bodie's eyebrow lifted towards Ojuka, departing

AFTER OJUKA

SEBASTIAN

unscathed. And his lady wife, looking out at them with big, sombre dark eyes, on another journey entirely.

"Bitch," Doyle snapped viciously from the side of his mouth, turning away. "I *knew* it, knew there was something wrong when she showed up at the hotel. And yet I let them get in—!" He shook his head in disbelief at his own stupidity; he had been careful, just not careful enough. What counted all those years, months of the highest day-to-day training if at the last minute he was going to blow it with one stupid mistake?

Lives got lost that way.

"What's it matter now, anyway?" Bodie said, determinedly cheerful: after all, the job was done, they lived and breathed again.

Doyle was looking at him in an unfriendly way, eyes like chips of stone. "Well, nothin'. Not to you. Or to me, or Cowley. Another job crossed off and a

bit more unsung glory for CI5. But—that girl back there at the hotel—"

Bodie only shook his head, looking down at the ground. "We'd best get on our way, mate."

Through no fault of her own—

All she had done was be there. When he and Bodie, just by driving up to the door, had drawn her into someone else's war.

"Some angelfish we turned out to be," was Doyle's one, bitter comment as he swung himself into the passenger seat of Bodie's borrowed car.

"You coming out for a pint tonight?"

Doyle turned to stare out of the window as Bodie started the car. "Think I'll get an early night."

Bodie's face twisted. "Ah, c'mon, mate. Just a quick half."

Doyle's head came around, his stare burning like acid though his voice was quiet enough: "I said no, Bodie."

Bodie kept his mouth shut after that. His partner was best left alone at such times: throw in too many sweet words of comfort and you were likely to find yourself bitten to the bone. Doyle smelt of gunsmoke and of sweat: he kept his head down and studied his wrists, wincing from time to time as he shifted position. Always made a fuss about small injuries did Doyle, although when it came down to it he presented himself fearlessly to bullets, terrorists, bombs. Trusting his swift reactions and his perfect aim to save himself, no doubt.

And me, reflected Bodie, remembering Doyle's bullet whining past his ear to take out the man threatening Bodie behind, Doyle's eye as he sighted it in clear and cold and merciless. *Both have an extra hole or two by now, I reckon, without Doyle's speed and timing. Was that only yesterday—? Seemed like a lifetime ago.*

He stopped outside Doyle's flat to let him out. Barely a grunt of thanks floated back his way. He sat there a moment, hand on the gearknob, watching Doyle running up the steps, hand on the bannister, hunched over slightly, blue jeans dirty. The white jacket was dirty, too, looked like a bloodstain or two here and there.

Oh, Raymond. A white jacket. Not the best thing to wear on a shootout, was it?

No backwards look. The door slammed.

Bodie put the car into gear and drove off. Pity about Doyle turning on to guilt-trip mode: would have been nice to hang around with him tonight, unwind a bit after the tensions of the last few days. But that was Ray for you: he could switch from the matey grin to the look of ice at the drop of a hat. At one time Bodie had been sure Doyle disliked him; he hadn't cared one fig, Doyle could like him or loathe him as he chose just so long as they worked well together.

Which they did, right from day one.

And sometimes—

Sometimes he fancied an attraction between them that went beyond friendship, a sexual thing, electric and alive as hell. Whether Doyle felt it too he couldn't say and wasn't going to ask, but occasionally there were clues. *"So if you don't mind sharing?"* The look Doyle had exchanged with him in that narrow hotel hallway had been pure innuendo, shared, instantaneous.

Bodie sighed as he pulled the big car around the corner of the Oakham Court Road where his

current apartment was. Pity about the girl. Pity about Doyle, too.

NEXT morning, bright and fresh and early, Bodie was presenting his ID at the entrance to CI5.

"That's not you, is it?" said the girl on duty, peering closely at the picture.

Bodie was affronted, and peered at it with her. "Good mug shot, that is. Tall, dark and handsome devil, isn't he?"

"That's what I mean," she said, and Bodie swatted her on the arm for cheek, and sailed in through the narrow corridors to the recce room. He located Doyle at once, over in the corner. Cream shirt, clean jeans, brown boots, reading something that wasn't *Playboy* from the look of it. One lift of the eyebrow was all the acknowledgement he got, but then again it was all he needed.

"Didn't do so bad yesterday, I hear, 3.7."

Bodie turned around, grinned. "Didn't do so bad yourself, Murph. Hear you copped a vanload of hot goods along the way. You wanna watch that, mate, you'll be landing yourself a post back in the Force."

"An' I hear the Cow's got the two of you on report—"

"Wha—?" and then he saw the twinkle in Murphy's blue Irish eyes.

"Wasting too much ammo, Bodie. *One* bullet per one body, you know the rules. But Doyle's got his eye in, I hear."

He's a beauty," Bodie acknowledged. "Can't miss. I reckon, take out Towser's brain, whirl it round on a string, Doyle could it at sixty paces."

"No kidding?" Murph marvelled. "Put it back afterwards?"

"Why bother, who'd know the difference."

Murph stood with his hands on his hips watching Bodie push his way through the cluttered chairs and tables and agents to get to his partner, then he shook his head gently and went off to study some maps in the obs. room.

Bodie made a face, waved his hand around to disturb the haze of blue smoke around Doyle, who also grimaced, not looking up from the papers he held. "Yeah, I know, can't breathe in 'ere can you? Go out for a minute?"

"Yeh, okay." Bodie bounced on the balls of his feet. Business as usual.

In the cool fresh air of the corridor Doyle leaned

against the wall. "Wrists okay?" Bodie said, remembering; he took Doyle's hand in his own, turned it over, examined the skin where it was shiny and puckered in places. "Tried to barbecue yourself, hmm?"

Doyle retrieved his hand, ran it down the outside of his shirt; his thoughts seemed far away. Bodie tracked the absent fondling with his eyes; Doyle's hand got as far as the waistband of his jeans, then travelled up again to where his nipples must lie before he took the hand away and shuffled the papers he held, eyes downcast.

"What you got there then?" Bodie wondered, cheerfully enough, and he thrust his chin over Doyle's shoulder for a look. Doyle didn't exactly hold it out for him to see, but he didn't hide it, either. It was a double sheet of A4 printout. Bodie scanned the top quickly: Personnel Data Request/CI5/4.5/10.10.82. Davies, Virginia Sophie, DOB 12.9.60.

Date of death, 9.10.82, presumably; for Bodie guessed at once that this must be the girl from the hotel, a little souvenir Doyle had called up for himself the better to flay himself with. "Virgin for short, but not for long, eh?" he said, and knew at once from the look in Doyle's eyes that no amount of black humour was going to sort this one.

"*Bodie.*" Doyle said it with a kind of weary disgust, and Bodie's mouth twisted wryly.

"Okay, okay, not a joking matter." He took the sheets of paper away, gently. About eighty lines, he reckoned, to sum up and dismiss her: birth, school, job, bloke, death. Not much time. Never enough time...

He put his hand on Doyle's shoulder. "Don't blame yourself, Ray."

"I was there," Doyle said, eyes screwed up as he ran the memory one more time. "She was terrified—squawked like a fuckin' chicken—and I couldn't do one fucking thing to save her."

"All right. But it wasn't you that shot her. Not you that pulled the fucking trip on the gun. It *wasn't your fault.*"

"No," said Doyle, his eyes cold and set and hard, "it was that bastard Parker."

Bodie touched one finger to the split at the corner of Doyle's mouth, the little swelling there. "Wasn't very nice to you either, was he?"

At that, a peculiar little smile crossed Doyle's lips. "Oh, I think he wanted to be—far too nice."

Bodie stared at him. "Did he come on to you?"

Doyle smiled, looking him in the eye, tipping his head back a little. "In a way."

"I'd have killed him," Bodie said, a flashtide of anger giving him a sudden adrenalin rush. "I'd've ripped his cock off and made him eat it."

"Oh yeah, he'd have loved that all right." At least Doyle was grinning now, amused by his violence. Bodie was leaning in over him, actively protective, looking down at him, darkly troubled. A little cluster of agents were approaching and going past them; Doyle caught the curious backwash of their gaze. He kicked Bodie away from him. "Can't keep meeting like this. People will start to talk."

"What?" Bodie was still hard with anger, not with him at all.

"By the time that one gets back to the recce room, it'll be you giving me a quick one against the wall."

"What *are* you going on about?" Bodie realised he was crowding in on Doyle, moved away. They began to walk together, side by side, down the beige corridor towards the coffee machine, but before they reached it Cowley's head popped out of his office like a tortoise out of its shell. The same glare, the same discontented mouth.

"Bodie! Doyle!"

Thus summoned, exchanging a look they entered Cowley's inner sanctum.

"Well, the Ojuka situation is now resolved," Cowley said without preamble, and Bodie's lips wrinkled smugly.

"Just doing our job, sir."

Cowley glared at him. "There's no room for complacency, Bodie."

"No, sir," they chorused. "We'll spend the day training if you like," Bodie added: he quite fancied a day spent in smooth physical activity, shooting and diving and competing with Ray.

"Since when have I needed you, Bodie, to arrange my schedules for me?" and Bodie muttered something, abashed. "There's such a thing as being overtrained, you know," Cowley continued; and from the peevish tone of his voice, the hard glint in his eye, you would never know that in fact he was pleased with these two, very pleased, and in mind to reward them with a word of praise; *'good men'*, or the like.

Then his mind shut close on it and he glared at them again, standing there confident and cocky and sure. They knew they were good men. No

need to gild the lily.

"I've just had a reminder through," he said, favouring them with a nasty smile. "Someone's on the ball in Records. You're both of you long overdue for a refresher First Aid course."

Bodie and Doyle met each other's eye. Doyle rested first his elbow, then his head, on Bodie's shoulder and hid his eyes. "Off you go now and collect the details from the office." Cowley waved them briskly away.

As they left the office gloomily, Bodie said: "You'd think he might have said something. Nothing too heavy." He adopted an upper class accent. "Not bad, chaps'. Would've been enough, wouldn't it, Doyle?"

Doyle spotted a can, skittered up to it, aimed it for goal, and kicked. It scored against both walls. "I suppose you might say this is his idea of a day of rest," he offered, not very sure.

Bodie muttered, thinking of Avery, "Wish I had some dirty money in Africa. I'd take a very long safari."

"Oh yeah, you, well, closest you ever got to dirty money is that 10p you dropped in the mud out running."

"Yeh—and I couldn't be bothered to search around for it." Bodie clapped an admiring arm around his thrifty partner, leaning in close to his ear. "You could though, couldn't you, Ray? What did you do with it—just out of interest?"

"I'm savin' up, aren't I? Maybe you'll get a birthday card this year, after all."

This was more like it, Doyle's blues leaving him like clouds off a mountaintop, leaving only the clear sky of his eyes. Bodie reached over while the going was good, took the folded sheets of paper out of Doyle's top pocket.

"Don't hurt yourself with this, Ray." He dropped it into the nearest bin to lie among the crumpled cans and frag-ends. "If anyone could have saved her, you would have."

The truth of that reached Doyle at last, and he stood still for a moment, thinking about it. "She lived with her mother. On her own. D'you think I should go and see her? Try and tell her—"

"Tell her what." Bodie shook his head. "Whatever could you say, Ray; you didn't even know her. Leave it be."

In his urgency to reassure, he had moved very close to Doyle again, backed him to the wall. Brooding green eyes locked with Bodie's steady

dark gaze, he brought one hand up to Doyle's shoulder; he could see the throb of pulse in Doyle's throat, the little jump of muscle beside his mouth as he swallowed. Doyle waited, fascinated by the intensity of Bodie's attitude, the resolute set of his jaw. For a moment—

A long, long moment. Then Bodie took his hand off Doyle's shoulder, hit the wall beside him lightly, and turned and walked briskly off.

"Thought you were going to kiss me," Doyle said to him, catching up with no apparent effort.

"Murph, Peters," Bodie acknowledged, lifting a hand in greeting as they passed. He said without looking at Doyle: "Did you now? Relieved, or disappointed?"

"Whaddayou think, flower," Doyle camped, fluttering his eyelashes, and seeing the look in his eye Bodie began to run, dodging, just in time.

The First Aid course took place in a chilly little church hall in a shabby London backwater. There were eighteen other learners, from young women to old women, but all of them women.

"You wanna watch that. I think she's beginning to enjoy it," Doyle yawned, as he watched Bodie's rhythmic compressions on the pink plastic chest of the doll he was resuscitating. Bodie made a face at him as he lowered his mouth over the doll's open one and blew into her airway, once, twice. Then back to the compressions again.

"Oh no, you won't enjoy it," the instructor's voice startled him from behind. "Mouth'll probably be full of vomit. Snot all over the place." A relaxed, confident woman in her thirties, she had the tilted nose and dutch-doll looks of a Mary Poppins, except for her striped jersey and tight jeans and a liking for shocking her pupils: one girl had turned green and had to go out while Jo cheerfully related the story of a man with a severed finger which his dog then ate.

She moved Bodie's hands slightly, a hairs-breadth. "You do it there, you might break his ribcage."

"Guy's dead anyway, isn't he?" Bodie said ironically, annoyed. "He'll forgive me a broken rib or two, probably use his first breath to thank me for saving his life."

"Oi," Doyle said in Bodie's defence, "I bet he's done it more times for real than you've done it on a plastic dummy."

She sat back on her heels and regarded him with

interest. "That so? What are you—ambulance men brushing up on your skills?" She grinned, brushing a dark lock of hair off her face as she gave him the once-over, taking in the tough beauty of him, the tight jeans, leather boots, open shirt.

Sensing interest, Doyle grinned back. "Something like that."

Bodie was worn out with his effort. He checked grimly for breathing. "Nah, still dead as a dinosaur. See if you can work your magic on 'im, sunshine," Bodie said, sitting back and wiping his mouth, watching as Doyle knelt on one knee beside the life-sized doll and waved away the antiseptic tissue offered him for the purposes of wiping the doll's lips.

"Can't stand the taste," Doyle said, speedily and efficiently performing the checks: airway clear, not breathing, no pulse—

"On your head be it," she said briskly. "You might catch something, y'know."

"Anything he's got, I want it," Doyle drawled, and he leaned over and applied his mouth to the doll's pink plastic orifice. Bodie's stomach tightened for some reason, finding the sight perversely erotic, pretty mouth Doyle had, too pretty for a man.

"You'll 'ave to watch him," he said to Jo. "He might forget what he's here for, he's got a doll just like that at home y'know." Doyle managed to backheel him in the foot without breaking stride. The pit of his stomach still fluttered as he watched what Doyle was doing, the line of his thigh in faded jeans, thin, muscular forearms taut as he leaned onto his linked hands to compress the chest. The silver link chain he wore slipped down his wrist, prompting a comment from the sharp-eyed Jo:

"You'd take the bangle off first, of course?" but the scattering of laughter from the onlookers at Doyle's expense died out as Doyle looked up at her, flint-eyed, and said, "Oh yes, darlin'. An' I'd ask you to hold it for me," and Bodie felt another shiver inside himself: what was wrong with him today? Something was different: that all his instincts were responding to Doyle as someone he wanted to know more, and differently, than he should.

They moved on to blood loss. Shock. Internal bleeding. Gunshot wounds.

Their lady leader had her own way of dealing with hecklers, and cast around no more than a second for her volunteer to demonstrate various

body parts and manœuvres. "Oi! One of you two," she pointed peremptorily, "the Ambulance Men. Come and lie down for me," and Bodie, who disliked exposure, thrust forward Doyle, who thrived on it.

There was quite a lot of good-natured laughter from the female audience as Jo pushed Doyle to lie on his back, unpoppered his shirt for him and parted it, drew a line from his nipples and bisected it to demonstrate some nicety of anatomy. She invited everyone to feel his carotid pulse, rolled up his sleeve as far as it would go and called upon two victims to try to find his brachial pulse: and raised a laugh in indicating the general area of the major pulse in his groin, but archly announcing that she was not expecting anyone to search for *that* one. She folded him into the recovery position where he lay obediently unconscious while she showed them how to search for possible fractures, frisking him thoroughly from head to foot. Then she released him back into Bodie's care for everyone in the class to have a go at bandaging a partner's broken arm.

Doyle stood patiently as Bodie unwrapped a large sling practically and efficiently: in his vivid past he had dressed more wounds both small and large than either Jo, or Ray Doyle, or possibly the Surgeon General. As the others struggled with uncooperative lengths of sling Bodie was even able to look at Doyle's face as he tucked in the bandage, drew up his arm, knotted it neatly behind his neck. Doyle's eyes were distant, distracted, his breathing a little faster than usual, a light sheen of sweat on his skin.

"That got to you all right, didn't it?" Bodie said, half amused, half envious: maybe he should have volunteered after all. Mind you, he wouldn't have been such a pretty sight as Doyle, lying there with his tight jeans and his boots, his shirt undone, having some strange woman all but play with his nipples. The bruises which littered his broad but skinny ribcage seemed only to add to his pathetic charm. Probably everyone in the room wanted to mother him by now.

Doyle's half-slitted eyes came wide open and he stared Bodie full in the eye. "I'm gonna ask her for a date."

"Why, has she got palm trees?" and he fainted backwards as Doyle punched him. "Oops, there goes my collarbone. Still, I'm in the right place." And he presented himself to Doyle for bandaging, which he proceeded to do so efficiently that he was

singled out to demonstrate the technique to the rest of the class. Teacher's pet, already.

After Head Injuries, the next item on the agenda was Choking; bending Doyle over his arm and banging him on the back five times. And Doyle so ungrateful, too, complaining with a series of plaintive coughs that Bodie had gone about it with far too much enthusiasm.

"It's supposed to be more slap than tickle, y'know," Bodie defended himself vigorously.

Jo overheard him, and clapped her hands for everyone's attention: "What this gentleman just said is quite right: to be any use at all the slap has to be both hard, and direct. You're aiming to force the obstruction up the trachea by compressing the trapped oxygen. You two have done a bit of this before, haven't you?" she added, dropping her voice as she wandered over to them, grinning as she pushed a hand through her hair. "What line of work are you really in—police? Army?"

"Something like that," Doyle said deeply, hanging over Bodie's arm, with that devastating half-smile.

The look she gave him was speculative, searching. "Well, a bit of First Aid's going to come in very handy to you, I should think. Split lip, extensive bruising to the ribcage, minor abrasions everywhere, old scarring—you lead an interesting life, don't you?"

"Bit of a troublemaker," Bodie said, tutting sadly behind her. "Very nasty piece of work," but they both ignored him.

"Oh, very interestin'. Would you like to hear about it?" Doyle opened wide both eyes, sweet, dangerous, seductive.

She tilted her head at him, hands on her hips, and gave him a look.

"Promisin'," Doyle said as she walked away, and he rolled up his sleeves, cackling. "Very."

Bodie had to agree with him.

If the backslapping failed to dislodge the offending object, the next move was apparently the Heimlich Manœuvre. Doyle was beckoned out to the front again, held lightly in Jo's capable arms against her chest while she clasped her fists under his sternum.

"—apart from just finding the correct position, never, never try this out unless someone really is choking," she admonished. "—why?—well, because," and all the time she carried on talking

Bodie noticed that she wasn't in a hurry to release Doyle, keeping him right there as if she had forgotten she held him; finally, after several moments, releasing him with a pat on the shoulder.

"You wanna watch it, mate," Bodie muttered. "In danger of becoming an older woman's plaything, you are." Doyle looked very, very pleased with himself, as well he might, having just endured five free minutes of an attractive woman's embrace. "We'll have to do one of these more often, now I know why it's called a refresher."

Time to practise the latest topic: and it was Bodie's turn to hold Doyle in the Heimlich position. When they reversed their roles, Bodie could feel Doyle's body, warm and hard, pressing into his back, and something, some instinct of repulsion made him pull away.

"Sorry," Doyle said wryly, understanding; one hand rubbed the side of his face as he looked at Bodie, waiting.

Bodie patted his hand. "Don't be embarrassed, mate. I'm just happy you're enjoying yourself so much."

But the fun was at an end: the rest of the session was taken up with a written paper of multiple choice questions. They both found it very easy, getting perfect scores—"e marked his own paper, mind you," Doyle pointed out loudly.

It was 2PM. As the rest of the class gathered together pencils, paper, coats, and made their chattering way out, Doyle sauntered over and offered to tidy up. An exercise which ended in Doyle and Jo leaning on their elbows by the wall, engaged in a long, deep conversation, while Bodie grimly stacked every one of the twenty-four chairs himself.

Then, "Oi! You coming?" he jerked an eye towards the door, and Doyle turned his way.

"Oh. Right. Yeah." He strode out towards Bodie. Turned at the last minute. "Hey. How about comin' for a drink? Thirsty work, savin' lives."

A deep long dimple flashed in each cheek as she checked her watch. "Why not?"

And Bodie watched in disbelief as the two of them pushed past him laughing, and made their way to Bodie's car, and stood there chatting, waiting for Bodie to open the doors for them.

"Much as," Bodie leaned nearer, "I love you, I hope you won't take it too amiss if I go now." He nodded at Doyle and stood up, jangling the

car keys in one hand.

Doyle considered him over the rim of his pint pot. "Gonna abandon me, are you?"

"Well, you've got enough there to keep your hands full, haven't you? And, it may have escaped your notice, but we *are* officially on duty."

"Only standby. Do me a favour, Bodie—"

"Yeh," Bodie said resignedly.

"Tell the Cow I'm takin' two hours of my overdue leave, will you?"

"Ten minutes not enough?" Bodie marvelled.

Doyle leaned near him and winked. "Can't rush these things. I reckon she's going to turn out a peach. She's married—"

"Bad news."

"But her husband's very understanding—"

"Still not good news. I've heard that one before."

"Thing is, they're into all this wifeswapping stuff. He likes to watch."

Bodie remained where he was, eyes wide open, fixed on Doyle.

"Yeah, I know, tres kinky." Doyle's wry, expressive eye met his as he took a smacking swig of his lager.

"And you like the idea." Doyle had that look about him; someone had thrown his switch and there was no stopping it now, countdown all the way to the end.

Doyle shrugged. "I dunno. Just, I reckon she's going to know the game all right."

Bodie couldn't care less about Doyle's plans for Jo, but the sudden introduction of a voyeuristic husband threw a whole different light on the matter. "As long as *watch* is all he does. You wanna be careful, sunshine. Sounds like deep water to me." Not that Doyle was likely to listen to him, or take his advice if he did. If Doyle wanted to get into a sexual threesome with two people he hardly knew, or did not know at all, then he would, and that was an end to it. Doyle was old enough to know what he was doing; could look after himself better than anyone Bodie had ever met. Not a spare inch of flesh on him (except where it counted, Doyle assured him), smallish too, and yet he had the strength of high-tension steel and the nature of a mink. Exotic, but violent.

"Well, just make sure you tell me all about it afterwards."

"I will. Now push off, will you, Bodie?" Jo was wending her way back through the chairs and tables. "Two's company and all that."

Bodie gave him a meaningful look. "Ah. My point entirely."

"Husband's away at the moment, anyway," Doyle added, rising with grace to let Jo back in again behind the table.

"I'm off then," Bodie smiled at them both, a blaze of blue-eyed innocence. He leaned down and murmured to Jo: "He'll be putty in your hands, love. Just send him back in good working order, will you?"

Bodie worked on the Ojuka report all afternoon, finally dropping it into Cowley's in-tray by 5PM, where it was to cause the CI5 chief some surprise: the first ever on-time report from his best, worst agents 3.7 and 4.5.

BODIE was restless, various disconnected thoughts or feelings chasing round in his mind which he could not pin down: just the vague sense that he was not entirely happy about the way the day had gone, though backtracking it over and over did not result in enlightenment.

Well: in one sense he supposed it was all quite simple. It had aroused him, watching Doyle this morning, exposed and played with before a crowd: what that said about himself he did not know or care, but for whatever reason, it had turned him on.

Doyle, similarly afflicted, had immediately taken steps to deal with his own sexual tension, while he, Bodie, was still here wrestling with his. So. Simple.

He would ring up Louise—or Diana—fix up a date for this evening, and that would take care of that.

The expectation did not fill him with wild excitement, but it was the best he likely to get. He could, after all, hardly go off and screw Doyle instead.

Though sometimes he reckoned Doyle might not say no.

But that was not good enough reason to go for it. Lead to all sorts of trouble, would a romantic fling with Ray Doyle. Half the reason he and Doyle were so good together was that extra edge, some super-fine tuning of awareness, the attraction alive and strong between them. A dangerous attraction, it had to be said.

His R/T went off as he was cruising back home: he picked it up and held it close to him as he steered the car onehanded in and out of traffic. "3.7?"

The peevish voice of his boss crackled at him. *Alpha One. Where's Doyle, Bodie?*

"Following a lead, sir," Bodie said. "Someone had something he thought he could use." He shut his eyes for a split second.

I'll want you both in at seven tomorrow. Don't be late.

Bodie exhaled with relief. "Are we ever, sir?"

And Bodie—get that partner of yours to write the report as usual next time. His punctuation's marginally more by the book.

A wry smile crossed Bodie's lips as he flipped off the channel; old man never missed a trick, he really never did.

He decided to call round at Ray's on the way home, for no particular reason, see if he wanted a pint perhaps before Bodie's date. He could ring Louise from Doyle's flat: she worked till ten anyway, and with any luck she'd come off duty very tired and only too ready to fall into a warm and welcoming bed.

About to press the buzzer at Doyle's flat, a little message all prepared on his lips, 'priapismic' being the operative word—Bodie noticed with a rapid chilling sensation that the door was in fact slightly ajar, hardly noticeable really, just that the catch had not quite snicked down when someone pulled it to.

Ray, in a tearing hurry to get the girl, whatser-name, to bed?

Or—?

Trouble flicked on in his mind; one hand diving inside his jacket to wrap around the familiar, comforting shape of his gun he gently nudged the door open with his foot, and listened. His heart rate was picking up, beginning a drumroll in his ears, a prickle of danger raised all the hairs on his skin. No sounds.

He kicked the door wide and open and burst in, gun fixed and ready. It took his eyes a moment to adjust to the dim hall light, but his senses told him there was nothing there and nobody waiting. He rose from his kneeling position and shut the door quietly behind him. Still wary, gun still drawn and ready, he listened, then nosed the Browning's barrel round the kitchen door, and then the lounge—nothing.

That left the bedroom. And at once, all notions of trouble left him as he approached it along the passage, because he could hear them as he drew near, sighs and murmurs and moans. *Still*, Doyle?

He stuck his head around the door. The room was darkened, just one light on beside the bed on which two bodies surged, making wild and passionate love.

Bodie grinned to himself, walking noiselessly over the carpet. Doyle deserved this. He really did. It wasn't funny, crack CI5 agent leaving his door open. To any passing madman.

"Got you," he said softly, appearing beside the bed. Ray Doyle was lying on his back, the woman astride him, both naked, writhing. Bodie took time to admire the full swell of pointed breasts, huge dark nipples, the way she had her head thrown back, the loud, rhythmic way she was panting—"Yes. Oh. God. Yes." Doyle had his hands on her hips: his thumbs dipped into and caressed the cleft of her body near where it was joined to his, and that seemed to increase the pitch and crescendo of the cries.

Doyle was quieter, his pelvis rocking up, and down, and up again; his head had turned to one side and he had, unlike Jo, taken in the fact of Bodie's presence, with just enough breath to whisper, "What the fuck are you doing here," a choice of phrase which amused Bodie.

He laid the black mouth of his gun tenderly at Doyle's temple. "You left the door open, Ray. Very careless." He leaned nearer Doyle's ear. "Bang bang, sweetheart," he whispered. "You're dead."

"Shove off, Bodie," Doyle gasped at some private, exquisite pang; he shut his eyes and whimpered.

"Oh, I dunno. Might as well stay now I'm here, mightn't I?" remarked Bodie, spinning the gun and stashing it safely away. He leaned back against the bedhead and regarded the action with a desultory eye.

Jo was grinding herself down on Ray's body now, meaning business. Doyle had his eyes shut again; his skin was flushed with sexual heat. His body was withdrawing itself from hers and spear- ing into her again, such timing, a boat tossing up and smacking down to meet the sea. They must be getting close. Ray certainly looked as if he couldn't hold out much longer, his forehead creased, his mouth parted, his breathing swift and sobbing as if he were enduring the limits of pain. Bodie smoothed his hair back for him, then let his hand wander, warm skin, damp curls of hair on his chest. He ran his fingers through it lightly, Doyle so distracted he thought he was beyond noticing, until he glanced again at Doyle's face, saw the sultry

haze of his eyes alight and watching him. Lightheaded, Bodie smiled at him, and his fingers found Doyle's nipple, pinching it lightly.

Doyle winced, eyes closing, and cleared his throat.

"Kiss it," he murmured, his voice rough, rasping.

"That's naughty, Ray," Bodie whispered to him, eyes bright and hot with his own desire. "Too far gone to care, eh?"

Doyle's eyes followed his lips as they grazed softly over moist and silken skin. Watched Bodie open his mouth, take his nipple in and suck, sweet and strong; nuzzle it with gentle lips, suck again. And as Bodie's eyes lifted up to his face Doyle gasped sharply, his whole body convulsing as he arched violently upwards; and Jo shrieking, highpitched, once and then once more. As she threw herself forward onto Doyle's chest Bodie moved back; through hard, slitted eyes he watched Doyle come, and come, trembling all over his body. And when the fuss and the fury was over Bodie got up and walked out of the room to leave them alone.

In the kitchen he took the kettle off the gas ring, filled it from the cold tap, replaced it and lit the gas under it.

Then he stood by the window, staring out, though whether the view was the Clapham Road allotments or the pyramids of Egypt he could not have told you.

When a noise behind him startled him he had whipped around with his gun drawn and ready to fire before he had time to think—

"Sorry, sorry," he muttered throwing up one hand in apology, tucking the gun away beneath his arm.

Her eyes were wide and her pose frozen. "Edgy, aren't you?" she said sarcastically.

The kettle began to whistle. "Cup of tea?" he asked her.

"Please." She was fully dressed, back in her old jeans and stripy sweater again. "Well, it's been an interesting afternoon..."

"Have fun, did you?" he enquired pleasantly, stirring a spoon briskly around. "Doyle up to scratch, was he?"

She looked at him without smiling. "What do you think? Look, I'll leave my number, in case he wants to call. Daytime's best." She accepted the mug he handed her and sipped at it in silence, exclaiming through a mouthful, "God, will you

look at the time. Must be off." She set down the mug on the drainer. "Thanks for the tea." Hands on hips, she winked at him. "And the rest."

"Did you *get* any rest?" Bodie enquired, interested. And she laughed delightfully, moving for the door. At the last minute she turned, dark hair swinging, and gave him a dimpled grin.

"Almost forgot." She reached into her back pocket, took out two pieces of paper. "You both passed," she said with a straight face, and then she slapped Bodie on the arm and walked out chuckling.

Bodie set the certificates on Doyle's mantelpiece, one at each end behind Doyle's horrible Chinese dogs. It was time for him to go: he did not particularly want to see Doyle again before the morning. By the morning they would both be—just as they usually were, and they need never think about what had happened. But he had already left it too late.

"She gone?"

At least he didn't pull his gun on Doyle, appearing now in the doorway, ruffled head emerging through the neck of his shirt, mouth distorted by a huge yawn.

"Yeh, she's gone."

"Didn't hang around," Doyle said, not questioning, just commenting; he stepped towards the hob, intent on a reviving drink.

"She left her number."

"Did she?" Doyle said, spooning instant coffee into a mug. "Want a coffee?" he indicated the mugs with a trigger finger.

"Already had one."

Doyle eyed Bodie over the rim of his mug, not missing the dark, brooding gaze, the sulky droop of his mouth. Bodie just stood there, leaning on the drainer, arms crossed, eyes trained on the floor; they flicked up, expressionless, to meet Doyle's, then down again.

Trouble of some sort. Doyle could see it in the blaze of Bodie's eyes and feel it in the air, charged with Bodie's tension. He mentally shrugged it away. Bodie would tell him if he wanted to, and if he didn't, Russian torture wouldn't make him open his mouth. He swooped down to look in the fridge.

"Want something to eat? Eggs. Fancy an omelette?" He got to his feet, precariously holding four eggs in one hand. "You know your trouble, don't you?" And his eyes homed in on Bodie suddenly, sharp and penetrating, too fast for Bodie to look away.

"No," Bodie said, very quiet. "Think you do?"

Doyle gave him a cheerful, lopsided grin. "Bottle it up too much, you do. Look at you, all tensed up. You should have asked Jo for a massage. She was an expert." He shrugged a shoulder experimentally, the one Parker had twisted behind him yesterday.

"Oh, I'll bet she was."

"Pity she had to rush off," said Doyle, reminiscent, and at last, from somewhere, Bodie found the will to smile.

"So help me, Ray, don't tell me you're up for it again."

Doyle winked at him, scratched his chest, broke the eggs into a bowl. "You know how it is. Just need a bit of time to build up me strength again." He whisked away with energy.

Watching him, Bodie stirred himself to move away from the drainer at last. "Yeah, well, I think I'm in danger of forgetting. Can I use your phone?" He was already moving towards it.

"Who's it going to be?" Doyle asked, intrigued. "That nurse—Louise was it?" Well, she should give a good massage if anyone can." He tipped the eggs into pan and ignited the gas. "Look, Bodie. I get the feeling you're in a mood with me. Are you?"

That stopped Bodie in his tracks. He looked over at the downcast head and said to Doyle's hunched back, "Why should I be?"

"I dunno. Well, I dunno," Doyle said inelastically, turning to face him. "Wish it had been you with Jo, is that it?"

Bodie faced him out squarely. "Well, what do you think? I'm not made of stone, you know," and a wide, considering grin spread across Doyle's face.

"I knew it."

"Psychic, aren't you?" Bodie observed, not sweetly.

"These eggs are done," Doyle said, peering into the pan. "More scrambled than anything."

"Like your brains, then."

"You could have had her," Doyle said, head down. "Why didn't you?"

Bodie's heart picked up speed again. Doyle seemed to have lost his appetite, ignoring the plate Bodie was holding out to him. Bodie took the pan himself, tipped the contents onto the plate.

"She looked 'appy enough with what she was getting from you. Same to show her what she was missing."

Doyle looked at him, amused. Bodie was wolfing the eggs down, waste not, want not. He

held out a forkful for Doyle, watched as Doyle swallowed it absentmindedly, opened his mouth for Bodie to feed in more, eventually taking over the fork and finishing the plateful.

"You never made your phone call."

Bodie shrugged. The urgency of his mood had fled him now, leaving him nothing so much as tired; he turned away from Doyle, rubbing a hand over his eyes. "Think I'll just go home, okay?"

"Stay if you want," Doyle said. "Quick beer, anyway," and Bodie nodded, might as well. Doyle was going ahead of him into the lounge, spotting the twin certificates behind the china dogs and chuckling as he examined them.

"Worked hard for these, didn't I?"

"Hey, who was her star pupil?" Bodie reminded him, affronted. "You just volunteered for extra stretcher duty, that's all."

Doyle laughed, a rich, dirty chuckle. "And this was Cowley's idea of a day of rest."

"Day of—? Oh. After Ojuka, you mean." Bodie sat down heavily on the settee and waited for Doyle to bring him a beer, which Doyle seemed in no hurry to do; he was wandering around, peering out of the window, drawing curtains, switching on lights, the telly. Very cosy and domestic.

Yesterday, Doyle had nearly died.

The day before, Doyle had shot within an inch of Bodie's brains to save his life.

What a bloody life.

"About time," he said, taking the cold can Doyle was holding out to him, but his partner was paying attention to the news, which was focussing on a bomb which had exploded at an army barracks in Northern Ireland. Bodie watched Doyle instead, the curve of his rounded cheek, the cool sculpture of his mouth. He was wearing jeans with all the colour washed out of them, still tight, the lean line of his thigh pressing next to Bodie's. Bodie swallowed some beer, and on impulse he slipped an arm around his partner, squeezed his upper arm tight, feeling the thin strength of it, the way the rockhard muscle tensed to meet his grip.

Doyle was taking no notice of him, incensed by the carnage in Derry—"I mean, I ask you, they were just doing their fucking job."

"Misplaced concern, Doyle. Don't waste your breath."

"What the hell do you mean?"

"I mean," Bodie said, "try looking a bit closer to home."

Doyle shrugged his arm out of Bodie's grasp. "D'you mind? I'm black and blue as it is."

"Nearly lost you yesterday, you know. And *you* were just doing *your* fucking job."

Doyle grimaced. "Don't remind me."

"But there's still tomorrow."

"*Bodie.*" Doyle turned to face him, exasperated, inclined to be annoyed, but his irritation faded out, the look in his eyes deepening in answer to what he saw in Bodie's face. He went on, more quietly, "All right. Point taken. But do we have to think about it tonight?"

Bodie's lips twisted wryly. "Reckon you 'ave to think about it sometimes."

"It helps?" Doyle challenged.

Bodie sucked some more beer out of his can.

"Makes you realise—better make the most of every day you get."

Doyle's expressive face twisted again. "Can't say I didn't try today." He glanced over at his partner; in an oddly pensive mood was Bodie, dark eyes midnight-shadowed, fringed by downswept lashes as he studied the can turning over and over in his hands, the twist of his mouth sardonic, violent even.

"You should have phoned Louise, Bodie," he said with sudden perception; he himself had passed beyond the post-danger blues, nothing like a good workout to do it, everyone knew that.

Bodie stirred a little beside him, eyes flicking to his with a flash of mockery. "Yeah, well, maybe I'd just as soon be here with you." And his sudden, savage smile had a devil's taint to it.

Doyle took that on board with outward calm, though he was considering what it might mean: nothing more than Bodie in a difficult, provocative mood, possibly.

On the other hand, Bodie had been very gentle to him lately, angelish, and the like. All the grittiness, one-upmanship, violence, he now reserved for people other than Doyle: Doyle seemed to walk inside a charmed aura at Bodie's side, the two of them together against the world.

Yeah. You let me in, didn't you.

Took a long time, god knew how many perfect shots across his line of cover: he had risked his own life time and time again to save Bodie, and Bodie had done the same for him, no thanks expected, never count the cost. But there was of course a cost: both hard, both unsentimental, first had come respect, that was all, and then another feeling

which had a life all of its own, out of control now and pushing them out to the limit.

He knew how Bodie felt. Goddamnit, he ought to: he had been to the same places, seen the same things, lived and died and lived again a thousand times and would again if their luck stayed in, if Bodie's eye held, and his own.

Deep thoughts, deep water. His hand strayed to his midriff, caressing it lightly; yesterday had been hard, and the beating from the sadistic Parker rather more severe than he had allowed Bodie to know.

"All right?"

"Yeah, just tired."

He saw Bodie's sharp, hungry eyes range over him, but he did nothing. "Get us another beer, will you," was all he said. "Or maybe we need something stronger."

When Bodie returned he put his hand out for the tumbler of amber Scotch, shut his eyes, tipped his head back.

"Didn't it get you all worked up, watching us like that?" he asked without opening his eyes.

"Maybe," was the only reply he got.

The liquid fire of the Scotch burned sweetly down to his guts. "Would've done me."

Bodie made a little sound beside him, sneer or smile. "Yeh, well, you. Not all like you, y'know, mate. Some of us have great self-control."

Doyle grinned, lip lifting away from sharp, uneven white teeth. "Never seen *that* as much of a virtue." His eyes snapped open, catching Bodie's burning into his skin; his heart was racing, fear or excitement, both. Because Bodie in this mood was volatile, dangerous; anything could happen.

Bodie watched Doyle's elbow lift, long fingers raking through his own curls; his shirt was clean, smelt sweet from the washing line, but beneath his armpit was a fresh, damp patch of sweat. The cuffs were rolled back, as always, almost to his elbow, his forearms honeybrown from outdoor shoots. He had not fully buttoned the shirt, and as he moved one nipple was plainly visible, also the crease in his flat belly; the hair went all the way down from his nipples to below his navel and, presumably, beyond.

Bodie watched him with one desultory eye. There was silence for a while.

Then: "She was a find, wasn't she," Doyle yawned.

"I wouldn't know, would I?"

“Lovely little mover,” Doyle said, and he wriggled reminiscently.

Bodie moved sharply. “Don’t keep on about it, Doyle.”

Doyle was all malice as he said, “Sorry. Keep forgetting you didn’t get off today.”

Bodie’s mouth twisted, caught unawares by the harsh whisky sting. “Yeah, well, keep on bringing it up and I just might be desperate enough to make a pass at *you*, Doyle.”

Doyle flicked him an enigmatic look. “Yeah?”

“Well, it has been known, you know.” Bodie threw himself back, closed his eyes. Now it was Doyle’s turn to look, unobserved; his partner was wearing a cream shirt, black cords, black shoes. He still wore his gun, banded on a worn webbing holster. Probably the last thing he took off at night. His chin was faintly shaded with blueblack stubble, his profile lazy, handsome. Bodie had all the dark tough beauty of a fighting war-film hero.

“I got kicked yesterday,” Doyle said, quiet. “Want to see?”

“Oh yeah,” said Bodie bleakly. “Can’t wait. That’ll be a real thrill for me, Doyle.”

Doyle undid the last button of his shirt and pushed it off his shoulders. Arching his back a little, he began to unbuckle his jeans.

Bodie’s eyes flashed open at the sound. “What the ‘ell—”

“Look at this.” Doyle unzipped his fly, pulled down the band of navy underpants to show Bodie Parker’s footprint, etched in black. Bodie spared it hardly a glance; his eyes, hard and dark and angry, were on Doyle’s face.

“I’d be careful if I were you. I’d say you were flirting with me for all you’re worth.”

There was a curious, offbeat stillness in the room, one man’s tension a feed for the other. Doyle met his gaze, unblinking. “Would you? Well, you know me best, Bodie.”

Bodie said softly, darkly, “Some people might say you deserved all you got.”

Doyle’s face twisted, abandoning pretence, his patience at an end. “Ah, *come on, Bodie*. Look, you’re obviously desperate for it. The vibes ‘ave been comin’ at me all evening,” and this was suddenly desperately dangerous: they had arrived at last at the closed door.

Bodie was, he could see, under control, the terrifying control of anger, but only just, a pulsebeat leaping in his throat as he said, slowly,

“None of your damned business, Doyle.”

Doyle hooted. “Oh, that’s rich, that is. You made it my business, comin’ here this afternoon. Watching us—touching me—” He lay back, one hand pushing his shirt out of the way, shoving down his underpants a little more, revealing the pinkness of his sweetly curled cock. “Well, now you can touch me some more. I’m here and your girlfriend isn’t. Do it to me, Bodie.”

Bodie’s eyes dwelt on him, from here to there, angry, hungry.

“Come on,” Doyle said again, urging, coaxing, “*come on*, Bodie. You’re so hot for it you won’t even notice the difference. I promise you.”

His throat tight with fury, Bodie tapped him on the cheek with one finger, the only touch he allowed himself, the blaze of his eyes disturbed and violent. “Very touching offer, mate. Thank you. It’s at times like this you find out who your friends really are, innit?”

Doyle turned this aside with a sound of exasperation. “Don’t try and pretend with me, Bodie. Playing cool till you freeze up. I *know* you, Bodie, and I know what you want. Your eyes...you’ve been bleeding for this, all fuckin’ night.”

“Not for you,” Bodie said, deep and low. “Sweet as you are...what have I ever done that makes you think I could possibly want you, Ray?”

Doyle saw, out of the corner of his eye, that Bodie’s arm was shaking. He sat up, with an involuntary wince of effort, and reached over to begin undoing Bodie’s shirt buttons. “Didn’t say you did, did I? Don’t make a big deal of it: you’re in the mood for it, just bloody look at you, and I’m willin’. Shut your eyes.” And as Bodie did nothing, adding with more violence, “*Shut your eyes*, I could be anybody, damnit. Pretend.”

To hell with it: Doyle had happened on the perfect excuse. No big deal, two mates together, a little drunk: they need never talk about it, not ever. He would not and he knew Doyle never would.

He closed his eyes.

Lay back.

Forced himself to be still as Doyle’s hands, quick and light, moved over him, sorting through layers until he reached the man inside: he was hard, of course, as he had been on and off all day, forever, and he could not help, not with the strongest will in the world, the thrill that raged through him at the first cool touch of Ray’s hand.

He must have made some sound, some betray-

ing word, perhaps, *'oh Ray please'* because he heard Doyle answer him, very far away, and he knew they were in deep trouble, because he could not stop himself now, he wanted it too much, more than anything he had ever wanted.

When he opened his eyes at last to stare down at the long fingers ringing him, the flexing of Doyle's slender wrists as he worked on him, quick and sure and hard; *oh such skill, Doyle, you could sell it.* He must have practised on himself, to get this good, some lonely nights, the lights turned low: now wouldn't that be a sight to see...

Doyle murmured to him something, his name, and then: "yeah, you like this, don't you," and then his name again. Helpless, tender, Bodie reached out a hand to him, and in quick understanding Doyle nuzzled his fingers, turning his cheek against Bodie's palm over and over again; he kissed it, and his belly, and then he looked up. His eyes were very bright; "Is this what you want, Bodie?" he whispered; and Bodie watched through slitted eyes Doyle swallow the tip of his cock, wicked tongue flickering, the wet heat shocking; it sent him sky-high, right out over the edge. He twined his fingers in Doyle's hair and dragged him off hard, his cock shooting, the quick white spurts flying away from him while his whole body convulsed in the sweetest, sharpest pleasure: he heard himself cry out, like a man gutshot, the cruellest of deaths, and the most certain.

It was very late now: midnight, or soon after. They had lain this way for a while; perhaps they had slept, Doyle had lost track of time and couldn't be sure. Bodie was awake now, anyway. Doyle could sense the movements of his eyes looking out over Doyle's head. At least Bodie had held him afterwards, Doyle's head on the smooth warm planes of his chest, the hardmuscled circle of Bodie's arms loosely around him. Once or twice he had felt Bodie's fingers slip through his hair, smoothing it, in what was surely a caress. And that was more than he had expected.

He didn't want to move, not even to speak, knowing that to break the spell would mean the end of things—perhaps forever, but at last he found the courage, lifted his head away from Bodie's heart and spoke his name.

Above him Bodie sighed, a little waft of cool air stirring his bare skin. "Yeah?"

"All right?"

"Yeah." Bodie pulled away from him now, not in an unfriendly way, but gently, and sat up. Doyle watched him look down at his white shirt, wet through to his skin in several places: he wondered what was going through Bodie's mind.

"Should've let me go the whole way, sunshine," he said softly. "I would have done."

Bodie looked at him briefly. "Didn't want to choke you. Or whatever."

"Oh, cocky," Doyle murmured, and gave him a slow, beautiful smile. After a moment Bodie smiled back at him, enigmatically, the feeling in his eyes too deep to read.

"Must say, you did that as if you were born to it."

"Was quite a sight. You comin' silver bullets everywhere. Would've seen off any vampire." He was chatting for the sake of it, seeing Bodie reach for his holster, begin to strap it on over the stained shirt.

"You goin'?" he made himself say.

Bodie's reply came as a relief to him; he had had some idea that Bodie might be angry with him, or with himself, but angry, anyway.

"Not much point now, is there—Cowley wants us at 7. Don't mind if I stay, do you?"

Doyle shook his head. He reached out for Bodie's hand, took it in his own, squeezed it very hard. Neither of them said anything for a moment. Doyle was gathering all his courage for the next question, almost but not quite the hardest of all.

"Well? Was it good—or not?" he demanded, with cheeky bravado, and after a moment Bodie smiled, one of his rare, sweet smiles, a warmth beginning around his mouth and softening it, lighting up his eyes as he looked into Doyle's. *Don't let the cat get at 'im...*

"With you? Ah, mate, you don't need to ask, do you? Better than I ever dreamed, okay?"

"Then why do I get the feeling you wish I hadn't done it?" Doyle sharpened up his tone, though he almost wished he hadn't as he saw the light die in Bodie's eyes as he looked outwards, away from Doyle, though when Doyle pushed against him, demanding, his arm went around Doyle and stayed there, easy, as if it belonged there.

"I dunno...superstitious? Or something."

"How d'you mean?"

Bodie's face turned towards him again: it wore an expression of absorption as he pushed Doyle's shirt aside, began to trace around his nipples with one squaretipped finger.

He spoke very softly, looking at his own hand, not at Doyle's face. "I wouldn't lie to you, Ray, there's been times before I've thought about this. Thought about you like this. I shouldn't have, I know, but—"

"Ah, come on. You know I've thought about it too."

Bodie went on as if he hadn't heard, "I always thought, better that we never let it get off the ground. Never let it get a hold on us. It was always there, but—as long as we never did anything about it, I had the feeling we'd be okay. We'd be together. Nothing would go wrong—"

"A lucky charm." Ray Doyle laughed, quite harshly; and he grabbed back Bodie's hand, laced his fingers through it and brought it to his mouth for a kiss. "You're mad, Bodie, you know that. What difference can it possibly make—?"

"I dunno," Bodie said, and looked into his eyes, a look so sweet, so searching it got to Doyle and stabbed him to the heart. "Never change a winning game, they say. And now we have."

"Well, at least we'll die 'appy," Doyle shot back at him, but he saw this was not funny for Bodie, and he sobered quickly. "What do you wanna do then?" Suddenly he had arrived at it: the hardest question, and he was already feeling an angry premonition about the answer. He wiped the back of his hand over his mouth, jumped to his feet. "How does this sound then? Can't undo it maybe: but—" He shrugged. "—we got a bit drunk one night, a bit carried away, I

blew you—not that big a deal, is it? And now we forget it."

He began to move, blindly, towards the dark archway of the bedroom. Bodie was there with him in an instant, sliding arms around his waist and pulling him back against his own body, nuzzling at his ear.

"Ah no, you got me wrong there, mate. I don't want to forget it. I couldn't forget it."

The lightest touch of Bodie's lips against his ear was sending shivers all through Doyle. Hunger vanquished anger and ignited desire instead; he tipped his head back against Bodie's shoulder and let Bodie kiss the side of his throat.

"Could do the Heimlich Manoeuvre on me from here," he whispered.

"Yeah, but it wouldn't be top of my list."

Bodie's hands slipped around to the fastening of his clothes, began to unbuckle his belt and unzip his jeans. All willingness he pressed himself back against Bodie, felt the hard dagger of his thrust against him, aggressive, all power. It scared him and thrilled him and made him hard and ready, to struggle with Bodie, to give in to Bodie, he didn't care which.

"All the way this time," he whispered as Bodie threw him down on the bed; and Bodie looked up from between his thighs to meet his eyes, to share a moment of perfect, perfect understanding.

Madness.

They were mad to do this.

But they were going to anyway.