



*We open the Pros half of Bene Dictum as we mean to close it: on a hopeful note and with airborne swine. (Read M. Fae's last story & you'll see a few echoes of Crone.'s lighter sentiments.) Now, if you have the energy and inclination, the editor strongly urges that you find a quiet spot, perhaps gathering a few like-minded friends around, and read this piece aloud. It's a story meant for the rhythms and cadences of the spoken word.*

e might have put me in that flat in Mayfair instead of sticking me in with you,"

Bodie mourned.

Doyle spared him a disparaging glance. "Pigs might fly," he said.

"Would have been quite comfortable there," Bodie went on. "Or the row house in Kensington," he added, keeping an open mind.

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PIGS MIGHT FLY

CRONE

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He looked at Doyle hopefully. Doyle stared at the house they were watching.

The house sat there stolidly as it had been doing all week. The only door seemed permanently closed, and the garage, while undoubtedly attached, obligingly fronted on the street right next to it. If anything about it had changed at all, it showed no sign. Well, maybe the bit of grass in front had grown a little, but Bodie doubted even that.

"Any tea left?" he asked presently when Doyle showed no sign of wishing to commiserate with him.

Doyle handed him the flask wordlessly and Bodie poured the last spoonful into his cup. He sighed loudly and slumped in his seat.

"Bloody boring, this," he announced.

"Right," agreed Doyle.

Bodie swallowed the mouthful of tea. "Stupid pipes," he grumbled. "Why'd they have to go and

break anyhow? Water all over the basement. Half the ground floor flats're a mess."

"Good thing you live on the third floor then, isn't it? Can go home any time you want."

"With no water in the building? Don't be daft, Ray."

"You just said there was too much water."

"You know what I mean." He sighed again into the silence. "Never had pipes break before. You'd think it was my fault, the way Cowley carried on. Just because—"

"Bodie, shut up."

Bodie turned hurt eyes on his partner.

"Was only making conversation. Breaking the monotony, like. If you don't want to have an intelligent conversation—"

"I'd love to have an intelligent conversation," Doyle broke in. "Listening to you moan is not my idea of intelligent conversation."

Bodie sniffed. Doyle took his eyes off the house for a moment to appreciate the incarnation of silent suffering beside him.

"Have some more tea," he suggested.

"Isn't any," Bodie pouted.

"Don't pout."

Bodie thrust his lower lip a little further out. "I never pout," he said.

Doyle kept his face straight with difficulty.

"Should be relieved soon," he offered.

Bodie sniffed again. "Relief's probably in hospital by now. Half the squad's in hospital as it is."

"Don't exaggerate."

"Exaggerate?" Bodie protested. "Anson, Franks, McCabe—" He counted them off on his fingers.

"That's three—"

"Well," Doyle asked when he fell silent. "Did you run out, or are you trying to remember what number comes next?"

Bodie's expression of offended indignation was almost more than Doyle could bear. He fought to keep from laughing.

"Rest of the squad's probably there by now," Bodie continued lugubriously. "Terrorists've probably blown up half of London and nobody's bothered to tell us."

Doyle gave up. "We'd have noticed," he gurgled. "At least, I'd've noticed."

Bodie's expression became even more deeply offended. Doyle rested his head on the steering wheel, giggling and cackling.

The beep of an R/T interrupted him. He wiped his eyes while Bodie brought their relief up to date, his report a masterpiece of brevity.

"Nothing," he said. "Nothing at all."

"Let's go home," said Doyle, starting the car.

"Your home," Bodie pointed out dolefully.

Doyle smiled at him. "Yours, too," he said and added hastily, "for now."

Bodie returned the smile. It wasn't that he objected to staying with Ray. Sometimes it seemed as if he stayed with Ray half the time anyway and the other half Ray stayed with him. What he minded was Cowley telling him he had to, especially when luxurious accommodations were standing empty.

If Cowley'd put him in that flat in Mayfair, Ray could have come and stayed with him, and maybe, in that elegant atmosphere, amid the sensual delights CI5 considered unnecessary in

agents' flats—

Bodie snorted to himself. He sounded like a third rate romance novel. He never used to be capable of such drivel. His brain must be going—fast.

Still, it was a nice flat. All polished wood, fine upholstery, ankle deep carpets. He remembered discreetly placed lights glinting off a glass-fronted cabinet and its display of— Waterford? Edinburgh? Anyway expensive crystal. A bit of good brandy in a couple of those balloon snifters— Appreciated things like that, Ray did, for all his superannuated guttersnipe pose. And maybe, just maybe, relaxed and mellow in such opulent surroundings, Ray might—

And pigs might fly, Bodie told himself firmly.

Doyle divided the remaining lasagna meticulously and set both plates on the table.

"Choose," he said.

"Huh?" said Bodie.

"I divided it," explained Doyle. "You get to choose. That way you can't complain. Born complainer, you are."

He waited to see whether his partner would respond to that slander, but Bodie was fully concentrated on the problem before him.

"It's really hard, Ray." He walked around the table and pondered the question from that angle. "When you make them exactly the same size like that, it's really hard to choose."

He looked up, guileless blue eyes limpid with innocence.

"Choose, you lunatic," Doyle ordered, laughing again. "It'll get cold."

They ate in contented silence.

Good job Cowley didn't put him in that flat, Doyle thought to himself. Bodie belonged here with him, where he always was. Unless they were both at Bodie's place, of course. Only right they should share, being partners and all.

Although it was lovely, the flat in Mayfair, and suited to Bodie's suave sophistication.

'Suave sophistication,' he thought derisively. But you couldn't help sounding like that about Bodie. Like somebody out of a romance he was, all light and dark and beautiful.

And generous. He'd have invited Doyle to go along, share the luxury. They'd have had supper on the terrace overlooking the small enclosed rose garden, on a table set with linen and silver. They'd have eaten off fine china, poured champagne into

crystal flutes. And in the rose-scented dusk with Bach or Vivaldi playing softly on the stereo, Bodie might even—

And pigs might fly, he reminded himself resolutely.

“Afters?” asked Bodie hopefully.

“Only ice cream. If you didn’t eat it all for breakfast.”

“Would I do that? Well, yes, I would, but you didn’t let me.” Bodie stood up and headed for the freezer. “You want any?”

Doyle nodded. “I’ll have a little. Just to save you having to eat it all. Put the kettle on while you’re up.”

Bodie obediently reached for the kettle.

“Ugh. What’s this brown stuff?”

He fingered a granular substance lightly dusting the counter. Doyle shrugged.

“Dunno. Must blow in when the windows are open.”

Bodie sniffed at the tiny particles that coated his fingers.

“Sawdust, maybe. Somebody’s probably building something. Place needs a good cleaning.” He looked around critically.

“Feel free,” said Doyle. “Anytime you want.”

Bodie stuck his tongue out at him, filled the kettle, and switched it on.

Morning found them back at their post. The house looked exactly the same as it had the day before—and the day before that.

“Cowley seemed a bit tetchy,” Doyle remarked.

“I’m not surprised.” Bodie’d been catching up on gossip while Doyle checked them in. “On top of everything else, we seem to have half a dozen people in protective custody, what with one case and another. He say anything useful?”

Doyle shrugged. “He still thinks Herbert-bloody-Brewster’s holed up in there.”

“Must have a tunnel to the outside if he is,” said Bodie. “Either that or he’s supplied for the next ice age. Nobody’s opened that door for a week. Or the garage. Sealed up tight, that garage. Wonder what he’s got in there.”

“Entrance to the tunnel?” Doyle suggested.

“Besides,” Bodie went on, “I’ve met Herbert-bloody-Brewster. He has the backbone of a jellyfish and the brain of a retarded flea. There’s no way he could be behind that extortion business.”

“True,” agreed Doyle. “Still, he could be involved. Those anonymous letters are right

up his street.”

“Um,” Bodie grunted in agreement. “Well, we might get lucky for once. He might come waltzing out that door and give himself up. And who knows? Cowley might give us the weekend off.”

“And pigs might fly,” added Doyle.

“Yeah.” Bodie brooded silently for a moment. “Short-handed isn’t in it,” he went on. “Even without half the squad in hospital—” He glanced sideways at Doyle, noting the quickly suppressed quirk of his lips. “McCabe’s out, by the way. Got his arm in a sling, but he’s walking around.”

“Good,” said Doyle.

“But Lucas is laid up.” He waited a beat, then said, “Chicken pox.”

Doyle turned to stare at him.

“True?” he demanded.

“True,” Bodie assured him. “Half the squad’ll be down with it by next week,” he added gloomily.

The day passed slowly. Still, the sun was pleasantly warm and the breeze fragrant in this agreeably upscale neighbourhood. Doyle went for the first batch of sandwiches, Bodie for the next. They finished the flask of tea and had it refilled. And when their relief arrived, Doyle’s report was as succinct as Bodie’s had been the day before.

“Nothing,” he said. “Absolutely nothing.”

“Want to go out for dinner?” Bodie asked as they drove home. “I’ll buy.”

Doyle smiled at him. “Sure. Thanks. What brought this on?”

“You’ve been cooking all week. Thought you might like a change.”

“I would. Thanks,” Doyle repeated.

That had been a remarkably direct explanation, Doyle reflected. The invitation wasn’t surprising; they both tried to keep the balance between them more or less equal. But they tended to deprecate their more generous gestures or disguise them with humour. He found this departure pleasant but puzzling.

Not sure how to respond, he found himself exchanging an extraordinarily open smile with Bodie. A welcome warmth permeated him. He settled back in his seat and turned his head to look out the window, humming tunelessly.

Bodie returned his attention to his driving, still smiling. Ray seldom revealed such overt pleasure, and Bodie found himself inordinately happy. The comfortable glow that suffused him extended to the world outside. It seemed only fitting and proper

that he should find a parking place precisely in front of Doyle's building.

They took turns in the shower. Doyle dressed quickly and called, "Be right back," over the sound of running water. He wanted to get to the shop on the corner before it closed. They'd almost finished the ice cream the previous evening, and he wanted to replenish their supply. He'd nip out first thing in the morning and pick up some of those pastries Bodie liked.

"Where are we going, then?" Doyle asked when they were back in the car.

"New place," said Bodie smugly. "Found it a couple of weeks ago. You'll like it."

Doyle did. Small, almost hidden amongst an odd assortment of shops, it seemed to specialise in crisp vegetables, slowly simmered soups, and home baked breads. They ate unhurriedly, sharing a bottle of wine and long, friendly silences. Around them, the rest of the tables filled up and gradually emptied again. At last, contented and replete, they emerged into the street and ambled along to where they'd left the car.

Next morning Doyle returned with pastries still warm from the oven to find Bodie wiping down the counter and the kitchen table.

"More of that sawdust stuff," he said. "Where did you disappear to?"

Doyle opened the box of pastries and held it out. Bodie's face lit up.

"Oh, Ray," he said. "You shouldn't have."

"No?" said Doyle. "All right. I'll take them back."

But Bodie had found a plate and was arranging the pastries on it.

"Tea's probably mashed," he said, his mouth already full.

Doyle went to pour them each a cup.

The house they were watching hadn't changed. They settled themselves as comfortably as possible and prepared for another uneventful day. But a few hours later, noise from the garage alerted them.

Bodie was talking rapidly and intently into the R/T when the garage door slammed open and a car roared out. Its rear end slewed wildly as its front wheels climbed the curb and bounced into the street.

"Bloody hell!" said Doyle. "Would you look at that."

"Go!" yelled Bodie, and Doyle hit the accelerator.

"We'll never catch that," he said. "That's a

Maserati."

"We might," said Bodie. "It looked like Brewster at the wheel. He doesn't know how to drive a kiddie car, much less a car like that."

The Maserati rounded a corner, slaloming from lane to lane. Then it coughed, jerked, coughed again—and died.

Doyle stood on the brakes.

Just ahead of them, the driver's door opened and a head emerged, followed slowly by the rest of Herbert-bloody-Brewster, empty hands held at shoulder height.

"Don't shoot," he called.

"My god," breathed Doyle, awed. "I think he ran out of petrol."

Cowley appeared more distracted than pleased when they delivered their quarry, unharmed if inclined to gibber. Failing to make good his escape in a high-powered car with an empty fuel tank seemed to have unnerved him.

"Not that he had any nerve to begin with," Bodie muttered. "Told you he couldn't drive that car."

"Someone should show him where the fuel gauge is," agreed Doyle, "and explain what it's for."

"Shortest car chase in history," Bodie snickered.

"Not a shot fired," said Doyle. "He should be pleased," he added, indicating Cowley with a tiny jerk of his head.

"You can't shoot the afflicted, Ray," Bodie rebuked. "It's not done."

"Especially when they're surrendering."

"That, too."

"When you're finished sniggering," Cowley interrupted them, "perhaps you'd care to explain precisely what happened?"

"Yes, sir."

There wasn't much to tell, and they felt amply rewarded when Cowley's lips twitched involuntarily.

"Not an intellectual giant, is he?" he said. "Let's hope he can remember something beyond his name and address."

"Let's hope he even knows his name and address," murmured Bodie.

"What was that, Bodie?"

"Nothing, sir."

"You may as well go home," Cowley told them presently. "You can finish up your reports on Monday."

"Yes, sir," they chorused in instant obedience and started out the door.

"Oh, Doyle," Cowley called after them.

They turned.

"Sir?"

"You'll have to stay with Bodie for the weekend. Your building's being fumigated. Woodworm."

They looked at each other, several conversations compressed into a moment's wordless communication.

"Uh, sir?" said Doyle.

"What is it?"

"Bodie's already staying with me."

Cowley opened his mouth—and closed it again.

"Oh. That's right. The water pipes," he said at last.

They'd never seen the Old Man at a loss before. He stared at them, visibly considering and rejecting possible solutions to the problem. Finally he sighed.

"Go get the keys to safe house three," he said.

"You'll have to stay there. Everything more suitable is being used."

"Yes, sir," they said and vanished before he could change his mind.

Safely in the car, they grinned at each other.

"Woodworm," said Doyle softly.

"The sawdust stuff," agreed Bodie.

"And safe house three—" began Doyle.

"Is the Mayfair flat," chortled Bodie.

Doyle rolled his window all the way down and stuck his head out, scanning the sky.

"What are you doing?" asked Bodie.

Doyle pulled his head back in.

"Looking for pigs," he said.

They separated to collect various belongings and do some necessary shopping, meeting again outside the flat.

"I'll take that," said Bodie. He had his own holdall and a couple of carrier bags. Doyle, already festooned with bags and parcels, was struggling to drape one more bag somewhere about his person and free a hand to lock his car.

"Thanks," he said, surrendering the burden with relief.

Inside, Bodie put his own things down and set about investigating the rescued bag. His eyes widened as he drew out a dark bottle.

"*Courvoisier*?" he said. His voice squeaked a little. "Napoleon? Ray?"

Doyle concentrated on an already empty bag.

"You like it," he muttered.

"Uh— Yeah," said Bodie with what eloquence he could muster.

He regarded the back of his partner's head, cleared his throat, and—after a pause—handed a carrier bag to Doyle. "Here," he said. "Put these in the fridge."

He turned away hurriedly, picked up his holdall, and escaped.

Doyle watched him disappear. The bag he was holding weighed too much and clinked. He drew out one of the bottles of champagne and blinked at the label.

Obediently and reverently he did as he'd been told.

They wandered through the flat—each trying to look as if he weren't following the other—opening drawers and cupboards, putting things away, making the flat their own.

Difficult, mused Bodie, watching Ray without letting Ray realise he was watching him. Any minute now Ray was going to ask him what the hell he thought he was doing. God alone knew what he'd answer. But every time he almost met Ray's eyes, his own skidding hastily away, Ray seemed abruptly to be looking at something else. An unlikely feeling of hopefulness filled him. He closed his mouth firmly on a Handel *Te Deum* which kept trying to escape.

It was ludicrous, reflected Doyle, that he suddenly couldn't keep his eyes off Bodie—and at the same time couldn't bring himself to meet Bodie's eyes. He rather thought Bodie might be watching him, but surreptitious glances—all he dared allow himself—weren't enough to tell. Still, the idea cheered him. Perhaps Bodie wouldn't be demanding an explanation of his partner's uncharacteristic behaviour right this minute. Preposterous to want to turn cartwheels across this palatial lounge. Idly, he wondered if his feet would hit the chandeliers.

The kitchen provided breathing space.

"I'll cook," Doyle proclaimed more loudly than was necessary.

"I'll help," Bodie offered with unusual alacrity.

And if Doyle had occasionally to stop short before he actually turned himself upside down, the movement was easily disguised by reaching for a spoon or a knife. And if Bodie found the odd liturgical phrase slipping past his lips, a clatter of pots and pans quickly made the sound unidentifiable.

They could never remember afterwards just what they had eaten, although the food hall bags from Harrod's (Bodie) and Fortnum and Mason (Doyle) attested to its excellence.

They ate on the terrace, bemused but peaceful, sharing a bottle of superlative champagne and finally a single long if inscrutable look, the spring-time twilight gathering about them. The profusion of roses in the small garden grew dark and indistinct, but their fragrance rode the notes of a Scarlatti sonata to fill the vibrant darkness, sound and scent more vivid than the sunset-painted sky.

When eventually they moved, Bodie carried dishes to the kitchen while Doyle turned on subdued lights and opened the cognac.

"Here," said Doyle, filling Bodie's hands with an oversized snifter. "Sit down. The washing up can wait."

Finding themselves heading for the same sofa, they hesitated, then sighed simultaneously and sat down together, glasses cradled in warm hands.

Doyle let his head drop back, eyes closed but face turned toward Bodie. Bodie looked at him and swallowed. Their arms brushed. Neither drew away.

"Ray?" Bodie's voice was breathless and—expectant?

Anticipation coursed through Doyle. He opened his eyes.

"Bodie," he said softly. He smiled. Perhaps it was the brandy. He found he could meet Bodie's eyes unwaveringly now. His expression, tranquil and tender, spoke for him.

Bodie laid his head next to Doyle's and returned his smile. The tenderness seemed a tendering as well and Bodie's simple acceptance an equal offering.

It was easy once they relaxed. Effortless communication restored, they rested quietly together. Bodie sat up and raised his glass to his lips, inhaling voluptuously.

"Good, this," he said, his eyes never leaving Doyle's.

Doyle raised his own glass in acknowledgement. He took a swallow, then set his glass down and reached out a hand. Bodie's hand met it.

They lay back, savouring this new dimension of familiar closeness. Hand in hand, they needed no words, felt no impatience. A welling up of contentment filled them, a recognition of completion. They shared the cognac in one glass, then

picked up the other.

"Too good to waste," said Bodie.

"Or to hurry," added Doyle.

Outside, twilight had turned to night. Inside, unobtrusive illumination created soft-edged shadows, burnished high-lights. Scarlatti fell silent. The perfumed air diffused about them.

At last, forehead to forehead, they shifted only a little to nuzzle gently at each other's lips, sharing brandied kisses.

"Apricots," murmured Doyle.

"Umm." Bodie nodded. "Good."

"More?"

Doyle held up the empty glass, set it on the table when Bodie shook his head.

Untroubled and serene—and slightly amazed at their lack of amazement—they luxuriated in this newly dimensioned intimacy.

"I never thought it would be so peaceful," said Bodie, his voice hushed.

"Did you expect this to happen?" Doyle asked in wonder and shivered as he felt Bodie's teeth fasten onto his earlobe, the sudden, intense throb of excitement both confluent and contrapuntal. "I could probably work up a little urgency myself," he added, "if you're going to keep on doing that."

"Me, too," acknowledged Bodie.

Desire fed on tiny touches, wove its sharp, biting threads through their particular entirety, a fabric sturdy enough to glory in its bright embroidery.

"But not here," he said presently, rendered breathless by no more than the texture of Doyle's skin.

"Ummm?"

"Bed'll be more comfortable," he managed. He lifted Doyle's head and smiled into glazed eyes. "Come on, Ray."

Obediently Doyle followed, surfacing sufficiently to relish the new possibilities inherent in the old situation of undressing together. But his hands slowed and stopped, his entire attention focused on Bodie, aware that he'd moved only when he felt Bodie's bare shoulder under his own caressing fingertips. Bodie, clinging somehow to basic essentials, leaned his cheek against Doyle's hand and finished the task of undressing him.

The bed, oversized and designed for comfort, welcomed them. Neither noticed. Absorbed in touch and taste, each had lost himself in the reality of the other. Nothing else existed.

"Did you really think this was going to hap-

pen?” Doyle asked again just before he went under for the third time. Then he abandoned himself to Bodie’s hands and mouth, failing to notice the lack of an answer.

Astonishing ease met unanticipated urgency. They were never clear on the details. They knew only fervour, ardency, comfort, and a silent perfection, a consummation beyond words. Then they lay lax and heavy, heartbeats slowing, still subsumed with adoration but beginning to breathe again.

“Not expect, exactly,” said Bodie. “More hope. But I did wonder when everything started coming all over peculiar.”

“Coming right, you mean?” asked Doyle. He placed a lazy kiss on the top of Bodie’s head, that being all he could reach without moving.

“That’s certainly peculiar,” Bodie pointed out and turned his attention to the skin along Doyle’s collarbone.

“You did wonder?” prompted Doyle when Bodie seemed to have lost track of the conversation.

“Whether maybe something else might come right, too.”

“Me, too,” admitted Doyle.

They exchanged slow smiles and lazy kisses.

“Haven’t seen any flying pigs,” Bodie added presently.

“Too dark,” said Doyle.

“Right,” said Bodie.

Drowsy and content, on the brink of sleep, they gradually became aware of small discomforts. Tangled bed clothes trapped Bodie’s foot, thrust an irritating lump under Doyle’s ribs. The pillows, so

abundant earlier, seemed to have disappeared.

Doyle sighed and sat up to investigate.

“This bed’s a disaster,” he remarked, trying to straighten a damp and crumpled sheet.

Bodie moved enough to rest his chin on Doyle’s shoulder and contemplate the situation. Even his biased gaze could see that Doyle’s myriad talents did not extend to making a bed with both of them in it.

“Is, isn’t it?” he agreed happily.

He stroked the length of Doyle’s back, unexpectedly available as Doyle leaned over to retrieve a pillow from the floor.

“How could *all* the pillows fall off a bed this size?” Doyle said, trying to sound disgruntled. He put the pillow under his head, wrapped an arm around Bodie, and collapsed contentedly on top of him.

Bodie ignored the question.

“We could go sleep in the other bedroom,” he suggested. “Cowley’ll expect us to use both bedrooms anyway.”

Doyle lifted his head and smiled approvingly.

“Bright, too,” he murmured.

Hand in hand, they crossed the hall and settled themselves, stretching luxuriously and then curling together between clean, crisp, freshly ironed sheets. Bodie dropped off to sleep mid-yawn; Doyle tumbled quickly after him.

They dreamed of white clouds in blue skies. Among the clouds—diving and soaring, floating and dipping and pirouetting—flew dozens of smiling pigs.