## A TOUCH OF ENGLISH EMMA SCOT

ONLY DOYLE would come to a stately home in his patched jeans, his scruffy olive green tshirt with the salad cream stain on it and his oldest trainers. In his defence, it would only be fair to add that he had been given the grand total of three minutes and forty-five seconds warning that he was going to be spending the next four days not on leave, as he was supposed to be, but mingling with the guests at one of the nation's finest homes. He'd had a choice: spend his less than four minutes getting changed and leave his home without so much as a toothbrush, or go as he was and actually have time to pack.

Glancing up as his partner walked into the billiards room, Bodie was extremely glad that Ray had decided to pack. Bodie was quite magnificent—and knew it!—in his dinner jacket and fine shirt. But Doyle—Doyle was turning heads, male and female alike, everything about him an intriguing, addictive contrast. Black suit, pristine shirt, black tie. Soft halo of curls, soft curve of mouth—and hard, hard set of the eyes. Hurriedly, Bodie looked away, hoping against hope, not to mention common sense, that his partner hadn't seen him.

"Hello, Bodie," Doyle said, after he had crossed the several yards of Persian carpet and negotiated his way between over-dressed guests and over-blown Tiffany lamps, "fancy meeting you here."

"Listen, Ray," Bodie started, deflecting the sarcasm before it had a chance to entrench itself, "it wasn't my fault. I didn't know Central hadn't rung you—"

"And when did Central last bother to notify both of us separately, eh?"

"Uhmm," Bodie did his Stan Laurel, "two weeks after we were teamed?"

"Just about."

"Well, at least you had a chance to grab some of your things, and you can't forget that I did bring some extra for you. That suit, for starters."

"Yeh, and I'll bet I get the rental bill for it as well."

Bodie wasn't going to tell him all about the rental bill—definitely not the size of said bill until later. Much later. Perhaps when Doyle was asleep, for instance.

"So," Doyle muttered as he sat down beside Bodie on something that was so uncomfortable that it had to be an antique and worth a fortune, otherwise it would have been chucked out years before, "which ones are the druggies then?"

"That's for them to know and us to find out. Anyway, Cowley says he doesn't really expect any action for another thirty-six hours..." He paused, because this was where his partner would expect him to pause, allowing Doyle his customary explosion.

Doyle, however, was unnervingly quiet.

"So, ehm, our George said he wanted us in place in plenty of time so that the natives had a chance to get used to your ugly mug and my perfection..."

Still nothing. Curiouser and curiouser indeed.

"And then we can report to him as soon as we—Ray, are you listening to me?"

Not a mutter was uttered.

"Obviously hanging on to my every word, you are. Yoo-hoo, Raaay!"

"Bodie," Doyle asked him, as if he had not the faintest idea that Bodie had been waving a hand in front of his face, "what the hell are they playing at?"

Bodie looked up, saw two witless wonders having some kind of heated discussion in the corner. "How the hell should I know what they're going on about?"

"You what? No, not them, you stupid git. Them, over there, at the billiards table. What are they playing at?"

"Oh, them," Bodie said knowingly, frowning at the table trying to work out what the hell they actually were playing at. "That?" He took some time to gaze raptly to make it look as if he were engrossed in the game and not just playing for time. "Oh, that's one of the variations of the game. You know. Pool." Then it clicked, and he remembered how he'd spent some of his hours in his various regiments, misspending several weeks with a few friendly American servicemen. "That's nine-ball."

"Nine ball what?"

Bodie shrugged, trying to sort out some of the details that had been hurled at him by teasing mates. "Nine ball pool, or some people call it nine ball billiards. Not that it makes much difference, of course." Not that he was going to admit that it might, because he had no idea whatsoever if it made a difference or not.

"Looks like it'd be great fun."

Bodie looked at Doyle then, wondering if his mate were feeling all right. "You? You think that looks like fun? But I remember-

"That's what I said about Pot Black on the telly. This is different. Don't have all those stupid red balls for starters."

"And how," Bodie whispered into a less than shell-like, "do you know what state their balls are in?"

"Don't you ever give up, Bodie? I've said no and I mean no."

"What you said, my lovely lad, was 'I don't think it's a good idea because we're partners.' No didn't enter into it."

"Didn't it? Well, it's the only thing going to be doing any entering round here, I'll tell you that for nothing, mate."

"Come on, Ray, don't be such a spoil-sport. You want me," he stopped for a second to nod a polite hello to the witless wonders who had finished their argument and were now departing arm in boneless arm, "and I want you. What could be simpler than that?"

"How about not working together? Don't you remember the Cow's last lecture-all four hundred and seventeen times of it?"

Bodie groaned. "No involvement."

"Exactly."

"Only one problem with that excuse, Ray."

"And what would that be, Bodie?"

"You never pay any attention to the old man anyway."

"There's a first time for everything."

"And that's what I'm trying to tell you! You and me, first time—"

"You're about fourteen years too late for that one, Bodie."

Bodie ran his thumb down the satin trim of Doyle's trousers, watching with interest how that made Doyle's eyes narrow and his breath quicken. He was determined that he wasn't going to let this opportunity pass them by: it wasn't exactly every week that he got to spend an entire Bank Holiday weekend with Doyle in such high-class, shared-room luxury. "Started late, did you? I mean, if it's only been fourteen years, and you being so much older than me, too..."

"I'm not telling you, Bodie. Subject closed, taboo and verboten."

"There's no need to be so embarrassed about being so old before you had sex for the first time—

"That was my first time with a fella." He stopped dead, drew Bodie a dirty look and said, "Nice try. But I'm not telling you."

"I'll tell you mine?"

"Now let me see if I remember this right. I can take my pick from your teacher, your next-door neighbour's son, the captain of the merchant ship you ran away on, the bloke who came round to re-do the roof on your dad's house-"

"All right, all right, so I tried to make a couple of stakeouts interesting."

"Interesting? You were trying to make them into grope sessions. Anyway, sitting here listening to you is not getting the job done. I'm going to mingle, see what I can pick up."

"Hope it's the clap," Bodie muttered, under his breath, and smiled sweetly at the bluerinsed old lady who had just taken Doyle's seat at such an inopportune moment. "'Scuse me," he said, sidling off and away after his partner, leaving an old lady to some rather juicy speculations about handsome young men who flirted with each other and then called VD down upon the other for leaving.

Still, he'd best start mingling himself. Not that he was thinking about doing the job-it

was Doyle he wanted to do-but if he did some work now, saw what he could come up with, then he'd have an excuse for retiring early to bed.

A very pleasant prospect, when he stopped to think about, which he did fairly often, being of a very libidinous bent—in more ways than one. The crowd was slowly diminishing, filtering down into the men who liked to play with long hard sticks and smooth round balls and those who liked to watch them do it. Bodie, needless to say, was one of the people who stayed. He listened in to sundry conversations as he wandered round the room, but the only drugs he heard mentioned were ones that apparently worked wonders on dogs with worms. Not quite what Bodie was interested in. He meandered over to the walls with their racks upon racks of cues, tidy rows of chalk lined up on the shelf and someone came up behind him.

"Do you play? Fancy a game?"

Bodie turned round, took one look at the exceedingly pretty boy, stifled a laugh and said, "Only if there's some money at stake to make it interesting."

"Oh, brilliant, absolutely brilliant! I'm Trevor, but everyone calls me Trevvie or Trevhead, something of that nature and how about twenty pounds to start, an extra fiver for every ball pocketed on the break?"

It took half a second, but Bodie sorted the tangled spaghetti of words out and agreed, looking out over Trevor's shoulder to grin at Doyle, sultrily.

Trevor whirled around, saw where Bodie had been looking and was fortunately dim enough to think it was the horsey blonde that had attracted Bodie. "Oh, shouldn't waste my time with her, she's taken. By my elder brother actually, Jeffrey, or Jeffers, but we don't call him that to his face, of course, he'd have a fit if we did, he's always been rather a pretentious shit, actually, so we always call him Marquis—Sadey for short!"

This last speech had carried them across the room and to the billiard table, where the previous had left the table ready for play and Doyle was chatting to a blonde-not the horsey one, but one who would go down a treat at the Miss World competition-which decided Bodie, of course, that he was going to be positively scintillating.

"Toss?"

Thoughts on carnal overdrive, it took Bodie a second to realise that Trevhead wasn't offering him a wank, but a coin to toss for heads or tails. Which thought immediately brought Doyle to mind, head or tail-Bodie wasn't fussy.

"Hello? Anyone in there?" and Trevvie was snorting at his own brilliant humour. Bodie decided that if no-one was smuggling drugs into this set, then he'd start, just to give them an excuse for being such idiots.

"Heads," he said, remembering to be nice. "And tails it is! I get to break," Trevor said. Hopefully your neck, Bodie thought.

Cue poised, face screwed up in concentration, ready to shoot, and then someone poked their head round the door, announced, "Freda!", at which mysterious summons most of the room—and none of them called Freda departed, leaving Bodie, Doyle, Doyle's blonde, her two friends and a matched set of old ladies dozing in the corner.

"Oh, what a shame, Higgins, you shan't go to the ball."

Bodie curtseyed sweetly and then made a very rude gesture indeed with his cue.

"I was looking forward to that," he said, pouting very nicely.

"I suppose you think that's a subtle hint?"

"No, I thought that was a fairly direct question. Oh, go on, Ray, play with me." And there was enough innuendo in that to sink the Bismarck.

Doyle gave him an old-fashioned look, but came over to take Trevor's abandoned cue, whispering as he passed Bodie, "D'you think we should be finding out what this Freda is? Could be the drugs."

"Pull the other one, Doyle, you just don't want me to score one over you."

And there was a smirk to go with that one as well.

Doyle, ever the gentleman—only when it meant he could score points, of courseignored that with a lofty and superior snort. He went back round to his side of the table, flirting outrageously with the blonde, but purely for Bodie's benefit. It was the perverse

streak in him: he enjoyed seeing Bodie crosseved with lust.

"My turn to break the balls?" he queried with an air of tangible innocence.

It wasn't his innocence that Bodie wanted to touch. "You've been doing that for weeks, why stop now?"

"Why indeed?" Doyle grinned at him, street arab in fancy clothes and prick-tease extraordinaire. One swift draw back of his arm, and crack, the balls careened all over the table in a riot of clacking colour. "Bodie, I've just thought of something. Am I supposed to pocket the balls at this stage?"

"Absolutely, Ray," Bodie breathed, fingering his own balls that he wouldn't half mind Doyle pocketing for him: he had a slit cut in the pocket of these trousers precisely for such an activity. Useful, really, if you had a willing friend. He looked, not entirely surprisingly, at Doyle.

"You're supposed to pocket as many of your balls as you can-although most blokes don't get more than two at a time-then you work your stick through them in numerical order, from smallest all the way up to biggest."

"Is that a fact?" Doyle said, again with the wide-eyed innocence that wouldn't have fooled a blind gnat. "And only two at a time? Oh, I am surprised. Okay, so I've pocketed twonumber two, Bodie, so get that look off your face. Right, number three up next. In the bottom pocket, I think."

"Awkward position, that," Bodie murmured. "Might have to screw under it," he added, wickedly, "to get it in the hole.

Doyle ignored him, although he missed the ball by a mile.

"Oh, what a shame, you're off your stroke, Ray. If you want, I could give you some lessons later?"

"And as I've already said," Doyle retorted with all the saccharine he could muster, "the answer is no."

"I shall leave you to struggle to find your stroke yourself then, shall I?"

"You just do that, Bodie," and he stepped aside as Bodie came round to take the shot himself.

"I think I'll pocket your ball—" a pause for a terribly sweet smile, "with a touch of English

bringing the cue ball round to kiss the number three ball and drop it down."

Doyle waited until precisely the right moment. "I'm surprised your balls haven't dropped yet."

That was when Bodie left the first large chalk mark on the green felt.

He turned round, missing Doyle only because that young man did a quick two-step out of the way. Then it was Bodie's turn to wait until precisely the right moment, when Doyle was bent over the table, arse in the air, cue on the table. "At least I've got you perfectly positioned now."

Large chalk mark number two. And by sheer fluke, the number four ball dropped out of sight.

Bodie, for the life of him, couldn't remember what happened when the balls were pocketed out of order. He said, hurriedly to hide his ignorance, "You lose a point for that. And it's my turn now."

Playgirl would have been delighted by the way he managed to turn so simple a manœuver into so ogle-some a spectacle. Doyle was, of course, completely unmoved. Completely, that is, bar a few recalcitrant inches that knew what they wanted even if they were attached to a complete wally.

"Oh, look," Bodie said, pointing at the lie of the table, "the balls are open. I might even be able to run them."

"Which means that I'd get to rack them, doesn't it, Bodie?"

Bodie took the hint, slowly working his way round the table, sinking the number three, the number five and getting a bead on the number six. He kept up a running commentary the entire time. "Learned this game from some Yanks I was barracksed with. One of them claimed his dad was the 1975 winner of the Brunswick championship-the opening year, that was, the nine ball championship." That last one was too good to resist. "I tried to get in, but they wouldn't let me play. I only had two balls."

"You won't have any if you don't shut up, Bodie."

"Then I'd match you, wouldn't I?"

That was large chalk mark number three, as Bodie heard what he'd just said to Doyle.

"I suppose you think that's a witty way of saying I'm too scared to fuck you?"

"Shhh!" But it was too late. The three young women were staring at them with copious amounts of interest. Bodie laughed, weakly and said, "He's just trying to embarrass me."

"Trying to? I just bloody did, or do you always turn beetroot when you play billiards?"

There was nothing Bodie was going to risk saying to that, not when the three elegantly dressed ladies—probably literally, knowing his luck-had surrounded them. "I think it's your ball, Ray," and he retired to the wall. For all of about two milliseconds, when an idea of absolute brilliance crossed his mind.

Doyle was bent over the table, working out the best shot to make.

"Checking the lie of the balls, Ray?" Bodie asked, getting three giggles and one glower.

"I think you'll need a freestroke and come three sides to get under the six ball, Ray."

Doyle refused to even look at him for that, winning the game being the best kind of retaliation when Bodie was in one of these moods.

He had his cue touching his ball, when someone touched his ball. Both of them, balls plural. He grinned, thinking it was one of the sniggering women behind him. He looked up and saw-all three girls. In front of him. On the opposite side of the table. And there was still a hand on his balls. He was, to coin a phrase, caught between a rock and a hard place. If he said anything, it would make sure that the girls would notice, and that didn't bear thinking about. But if he kept his mouth shut, Bodie would keep right on doing what he was doing.

Doyle kept his mouth very firmly shut indeed. And then Bodie squeezed.

Large chalk mark number four. At this rate, they were going to have more white on the table than balls in the pocket.

The door swung open and Bodie's hand swung away back out of sight.

"Ah, there you are, girls," came a voice that ought to belong to a Basil Brush look-alike. "Come along, Freda's waiting. And wake your aunties up, they should be in bed by now." The decorously dressed and couture-coiffed

matron took one look at Bodie and Doyle, sniffed, and turned on her heel, taking three grumbling young ladies with her, and trailing two grumbling old ladies behind them. The door swung shut, and the two men were alone.

Bodie grinned evilly, rubbing his hands in glee and saying in the worst German accent in the world, "Aha! Now ve haff you, Mata Hari, oont ve vill haff our vikkid vay viz you."

Doyle, being a spoil-sport, refused to play that game, going back to the billiards table.

"You know something, Doyle, you're no fun at all."

Doyle stood up, leaning against his cue. "You wanted me to play with you, so I'm playing with you. What more can you ask for, Bodie?"

Bodie shuffled his feet like a schoolboy. Then he fiddled with his cue. Then the chalk.

Doyle went back to the game.

"I'd like you to like me."

Truly enormous chalk mark number five. Doyle looked at him in amazement. "You want me to like you? That's funny, I thought

all you wanted me to do was lisp 'yes!' and spread my legs."

"Well, that too."

"As well as what?"

Bodie shrugged, incredibly inarticulate for a man who could normally quote poetry at the drop of a hat. "As well as...well, liking me."

Doyle sighed heavily. "I already like you, Bodie. Though why I don't know.'

"Not like that. Well, I'm not complaining that you like me like that, but I want you to, you know, really like me."

"But not...like that? Have you ever considered learning English? It'd make life much easier for all concerned. How do you want me to like you, Bodie? The way I like yoghurt? Or the way I like Mozart? My old goldfish? The bloody cat that ate the bloody goldfish? How, Bodie?"

More shuffling: much more of this, and Bodie could have a career on the stage.

"All right, that's it, I admit defeat," Doyle finally said in disgust. "I give up, Bodie. Forget I said anything."

The silence was deafening as only one of Doyle's sulks could possibly be.

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"I want you to like me the way you would...well, the way you would..." Something was whispered at the end, Bodie obviously in a paroxysm of embarrassment.

"What'd you say, Bodie? Didn't hear that last bit." The sad thing was, for once he was telling the truth and not just making Bodie suffer on general principle.

Another inaudible mumble.

"For fuck's sake, Bodie, can't you speak?"

"A girlfriend, a fucking girlfriend! Did you hear that?"

"I should think half the house heard that, Bodie," Doyle said, quite kindly. "So you want me to wine and dine you, spend a lot of money on you, fuck you through the mattress, unless you won't come across-not that there's much chance of you keeping your legs crossed and your bra on, is there?—and dump you when I get bored. That what you want?"

"No. Not like that."

"Okay, so you want me to like you, but not like that and not like that and not like that. We're running out of likes, Bodie."

"You're a right bastard, you know that, don't you, Doyle?"

"Oh, yeh," Doyle replied, looking as pleased as punch with himself. "And I'm going to keep being a right bastard until you spill your guts, Bodie. And there're plenty of balls on the table if you don't have any yourself."

Bodie glared at him, then shrugged, as if he didn't care, as if it wasn't anything important. "I can say it. Just didn't feel like it before. Nothing to do with being scared, or anything." He shrugged again, looking for all the world the way he must have when he was trying to chat up his first girl, or bloke, all big eyes and bravado. "Romantically. I want you to like me romantically. See? Told you I could say it."

"And so you could," Doyle said, turning his back on him, going back to the table. "I've got a ball in hand, so I think I'll go for the six, and I'll put a kiss of English on the number seven, and take eight from behind."

He stopped at that point, looking over his shoulder at Bodie, who was doing a very credible impersonation of a pillar of salt. "What're standing there like that for? Weren't you in the middle of something when that old bat came in?"

Bodie looked at him in dumbfounded amazement, then found his voice again. "You bastard!" he said, affection fighting fury, a wiggle of Doyle's bum winning the entire battle. "You've been playing hard to get."

"Hip, hip, hurrah. Thought you'd never notice. And before you ask, yeh, I just wanted to make sure it'd penetrated your thick skull that I was more than a wham, bam, thank you, sir."

Bodie came up behind Doyle, both hands making suddenly intimate contact-in other words, grabbing cock and balls, denim and all.

Large chalk mark number five.

"Bodie..."

"Can't say no now, Ray."

"Yes I can! Bodie, we're in a public room in someone else's house and the door doesn't even lock."

"Never thought you wouldn't be adventurous when it came to sex."

Doyle didn't actually answer, being too busy groaning because Bodie had his zip down and out of the way, and obviously had no intention of pocketing his balls-palming was more like it. Doyle considered making another protest, but then his jeans were pulled down and Bodie's hands found his arse, and then his cock again.

Doyle stood up, pressing his back to Bodie's front, wriggling around which didn't exactly help in the parting of Bodie's clothes, but certainly added to the general sense of urgency.

Bodie bent him down over the table again, the buttons of Bodie's shirt digging into Doyle's back, but he wasn't paying much attention to that, being far too interested in the way Bodie's trousers and pants were down around Bodie's knees and the interesting bits that were now thus available to Doyle for a bit of a free-hand stroke.

"I'm going to fuck you, Ray," Bodie said, rubbing his cock up and down the cleft of Doyle's bum.

"About bloody time, too," came the immediate answer, Doyle arching back to grab Bodie, doing a bit of rubbing of his own. He lifted his right leg up, so that his knee was on the lip of the table, and then pulled Bodie in EMMA SCOT

close behind him.

It's amazing what can be accomplished with saliva, a bit of precum and loads and loads of lust. Doyle grunted, indelicately, but eloquently, as Bodie pressed into him, stopping Bodie for a second while he adjusted, then thrusting back, impaling himself on Bodie's cock. Bodie's hands were roving over him, palming nipples, stroking cock, and Doyle twisted around so that they could kiss, tongue meeting tongue, sucking and kissing and biting, building up to a crescendo, Doyle's hands scraping the table felt, Bodie's hands clutching Doyle's cock, milking him, until cream spurted from Bodie into Doyle, and from Doyle, onto the table.

Well, it was another big white mark, but it definitely wasn't chalk.

Bent over the table, face next to one of the balls that had started the current run of events that ended up with Doyle's balls in Bodie's hands and Bodie's balls rubbing against Doyle's bottom, Doyle decided that he was a happy man indeed.

"Can see why snooker's such a popular game," Doyle finally managed to find enough breath to speak.

"Wasn't snooker," Bodie panted, still recovering from his exertions. "Was nine ball."

Doyle chuckled, filthily of course. "Wasn't

nine balls. Was only four."

But before Bodie could come up with a suitably obscene retort to that, there was the ominous sound of feet and voices and, presumably, therefore people, coming down the corridor. Having just come all across someone else's baize table, our two heros decided that discretion was the better part of valour and that it was time to beat an exceedingly hasty retreat out of here.

Clothes tidied and fastened in record time, they were walking decorously down the corridor before the first person even came within sight of the billiards room. Which isn't quite what could be said about Bodie and Doyle.

Who, at this point, were climbing the stairs to the room they'd been banished to share together, Doyle's infamous laugh framing Bodie's salacious comments about early to bed and early to rise, and how the early bird catches the worm.

"Yeh," Doyle's voice suddenly came down the staircase loud and clear, to the delight of a little old lady with blue rinsed hair who had been following them since she saw the pretty one arrive in such wonderfully workmanlike clothes, "but judging by what I felt across the billiards table, I'm going to catch something a lot bigger than a worm, right, Bodie?"

And never a truer word was spoken.