









contempt in the voice.

Cowley locked the drawer, to prove that he didn't need the gun to protect himself, and because, quite frankly, he agreed with Doyle. It wasn't often he over-reacted like that. Not often at all. But then, it wasn't often he felt this threatened. He took a moment to look at Doyle, to assess him, to see what he could do to pull this interview back from the complete disaster he was turning it into. He needed, he knew, to get a grip on himself, get himself back under control. He'd been tempted before, he'd hungered after some handsome man in circumstances not unlike this, but he'd never been this stupid.

Of course, he'd never been this close to yielding to temptation either, had he? That, he confessed, was the problem. It wasn't Doyle's anger that was the threat, it was his own weakness for Doyle's considerable charms. "Betty," he said into his intercom, "d'you have those reports for me yet?"

*"Just finishing them, sir,"* she said, *"I'll be in in just a moment."*

Cowley sat back, waiting for Betty, watching Doyle and deciding how best to handle this.

"Sir," Betty said as soon as she came in, "everything's here, apart from the situation regarding the conference and the duty roster. As soon as I have them, I'll type them up for you."

"Thank you," he said, not looking at her, devouring instead the papers in front of him. The first report was a disappointment, but not unexpected: the SAS were very polite, but they weren't willing to second Sgt. Bodie to a civilian organisation, and what's more, they were pleased enough with him that they were hoping he was going to sign on for another tour. Aye, well, Cowley had a few tricks up his sleeve to make sure *that* didn't happen. Next, a memo from the Minister, approving his leave, but due to that damned conference, the Minister was insisting that Cowley move his holidays up to the 6th—which was barely a fortnight away. Disgusted, Cowley slapped that paper down on the desk, and picked up the next. Ah, now this was much more what he wanted to hear. Murphy's report on Doyle: not on the streets, then, but an intimate friend of several important and very rich men who, apparently, were willing to put up with Doyle's refusal to be kept by any one of them in order that they could at least have him on Doyle's terms, which seemed to be fiscally wise and as moral as a rent-boy could

manage. Sandy eyebrows raised at some of the men Murphy had seen Doyle meeting—the man had better contacts in Whitehall than Cowley had! The security aspects were unnerving, to say the least. Frowning, Cowley went down the list, the names ranging from those high in Government to powerful in industry, and even one very influential TUC leader. Still, according to Murphy, Doyle was almost better known for his discretion than his bedroom skills.

Temptation knocked a little more loudly, and Cowley wet lips gone suddenly dry. Doyle, again according to Murphy, had no set prices, merely accepting the generosity of his 'sponsors', which meant that Cowley himself could afford Doyle, if he wanted to. If he wanted to! He was having a devil of a time not having Doyle right here and now in his own office with his own staff perilously close. Back to the job, he told himself, trying to be stern enough to make the command stick, get back to the job.

And for the first time in as long as he could remember, he didn't give a damn about the job. He shifted uneasily, unused to the need to adjust himself in his trousers: he usually had his libido so thoroughly repressed that he could concentrate elsewhere and any recalcitrant interest faded in due course. All that was fading in here today was his own determination to do the job he was paid for. He was far, far more interested in Doyle doing the job Doyle was paid for.

"If you've forgotten about me," Doyle said abruptly, "d'you mind if I leave? What with waiting for you to see me and then sitting here while you catch up on your paperwork, I've been here over two hours already, and it is past dinner-time, in case you hadn't noticed."

Cowley permitted himself the dangerous luxury of looking at Doyle, and admitted then that he was going to avail himself of Doyle's services. Not here and now, but later, discreetly, when Murphy was back on the Philips case and Doyle had been added to the 'secure' list alongside a certain Club and one or two very discreet friends. "I'll be with you in just a moment," Cowley said, going back to the paperwork, an unexpectedly sweet feeling of anticipation unfurling in his belly. "I suggest you use this time to go over everything Flaherty said to you that might be a slip-up we could use to prevent any more of these letter bombs going out."



