



“You were meant to,” Cowley told him. “Actually, he failed the security checks.”

“Deliberately?” asked Bodie, and Cowley leaned back and steepled his fingers.

“Conveniently.”

Doyle grinned, appreciating it. Cowley raised an eyebrow at him.

“What’s he been doing these two years, then?” asked Bodie.

“In fact, 3.7, we don’t know. He hasn’t been able to keep in touch; contact might have jeopardized his cover. He did pass on warning of a couple of bombs last March; we notified the police and got them removed without fuss. But early this morning he called for an emergency pull-out. Presumably he’ll explain why when he’s safe behind these walls again.”

“Reckon they’re onto him, sir?”

“Possibly. Or he may have word of another bombing campaign, an assassination, something big enough to make it worth his while to come in. He was sent out to use his best judgment, and if he feels he’s got to run for cover now, then we give it to him, and we pump him for everything he can tell us.”

“Right, sir.” Doyle thumped his partner on the shoulder and turned toward the door, stuffing the paper in his jacket pocket. “Let’s go.”

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They had made love that morning, hard and fast and good. They both liked doing it in the morning. For one thing, even as partners they couldn’t be spending three or four nights a week together; CI5 didn’t routinely surveil its own agents, but a pattern like that couldn’t help but be noticed eventually. And neither of them much liked the idea of climbing out of a shared bed and going home to sleep alone. But who would think twice about an agent—Bodie, usually—showing up at his partner’s an hour or so early in the morning? Cadge breakfast, plan the day, come to work in one car instead of two; it made perfect sense. And if breakfast was a mouthful of coffee and toast gulped on their way out the door, and they planned whatever needed planning in the car—well, who was to know?

Besides, Doyle liked sex in the morning, always had. Woke up randy, edgy, itching for Bodie to come over and tackle him onto the mattress. He’d actually tackled Bodie there, the first time, Bodie half-laughing, gasping for breath, and then kissing him back so hard and wet. Doyle loved to have Bodie fuck him in the morning, and to carry the secret pulse and burn inside his arse throughout the day.

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Bodie scanned the printout in the car as Doyle wound them through the London streets, heading for the disused factory complex it directed them to. “Doesn’t say much.”

“I know.” Name, brief description, address and time for pick-up. “Wish we knew if they were after him, at least—why he yelled for help.”

“Two years.” Bodie shook his head. “Makes an Operation Susie look like a doddle.” They had done plenty of undercover work, both of them, but never for more than a few days at a time. “Oi, remember that night when Macklin showed up in the pub with a bunch of the new lads, couple of years ago? Wasn’t Brady there?”

“Was he? I don’t remember.”

“Sure. They’d all just come off the assault course, and Macklin introduced them around when we met up with him, you and me and Jax and Murphy and some others. Brady was so pleased with himself for living through the week with Macklin, he bought the whole squad a round.” Bodie chuckled, remembering. “And then he realized he only had three pounds, and borrowed the rest off me and Murphy. Christ, he still owes me almost nine quid!”

Doyle grinned over at him. “Cheer up—now’s your chance to collect.”

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The sister had cranked the head of his bed up a little, before she left, so he wasn’t flat on his back. He would almost have preferred to be. Now he had to look at Cowley, glaring at him, and on the edge of his vision was Bodie. He couldn’t tell where Bodie was looking. With a dull, throbbing ache that echoed from his leg to his chest, he’d rather have been staring at the ceiling, himself. Hospital ceilings were good for that. Lot of cracks and flecks.

“Well, 4.5?” Cowley snapped.

Doyle didn’t say anything. Cowley took a step toward the bed. He probably meant it to be intimidating, but Doyle only saw the old man’s halting gait, his limp, and wondered if he’d have one like that.

Probably not. Just a bad break, they’d said. Messy, but in a few months you’ll never know.

Yeah. Right.

The Old Man was standing over him now, mouth tight with anger. “I send the two of you out on a simple pick-up, and what happens? I want to know how you could foul the job so badly. I want your report, 4.5, and I’ll have it now!”

Then Bodie took a step forward, coming into focus



next to their boss. He wasn't looking at Doyle; at least, Doyle didn't think so. It was hard to tell, when Doyle himself wasn't looking at either of the other men. It was a good ceiling; it didn't demand anything from him. Not like them.

"He's doped, sir. Because of his ankle."

Well, that was true, but it wasn't much, really, and Bodie knew it. Just some codeine for the pain, nothing that would string him out. But if Bodie wanted to volunteer to report first, Doyle was not going to stop him. He wondered, with an abstract numbness, what his partner was going to say.



They were to meet Brady in the shadow of a deserted warehouse, its massive doors chained shut for years, standing among its fellows in an abandoned industrial park. Untended grass that had once been lawn-smooth lapped the buildings, and was divided by the winding access road that hadn't seen a delivery lorry in years. They left the car in the road and climbed up the embankment, across the grounds to the building's north side; windowless, paint peeling, the wall stretched a good ten yards in either direction from where they took position near its midpoint, waiting silently. Brady might show up from inside, if some smaller access door had been pried or picked since the owners had abandoned the place; or he might come around one of the corners where the wall ended, off to their left and right. Hell, for all they knew he might rappel down from the roof forty feet above their heads; when Doyle gave Bodie a wry glance acknowledging their total ignorance of what to expect, his partner grinned, then slid a speculative glance upward.

Doyle poked him. "You're just thinkin' how much you'd like to do it," he accused in a low whisper. Bodie nodded cheekily. Then a flock of pigeons erupted from across the road, and hard on their startled twittering came the sound of running feet, and a gunshot.

"Shit!" Doyle spat, and bolted for the far corner.

Bodie was right behind him, and as Doyle skidded into shelter he threw himself down and around in the same motion, coming up on his knees to give Bodie cover as his partner whipped around the corner in turn. And ten yards behind him was Brady, desperate terror on his face as he raced for their protection, and another shot sounding from across the road. Doyle fired back on general principles; he couldn't see the gunman but it was obvious what was happening. Brady's IRA mates were on to him.

And worst of all, they couldn't get to the car. The direction of the shots indicated that they'd be in a clear

line of fire if they went out into the road again; and if the shooter was following Brady, as seemed likely, the corner of the building wouldn't hide them for long, either.

Of course, that went both ways. Brady careened into cover, head-on into Bodie from the sound of it. "How many?" demanded Doyle, without looking back.

Whatever Brady had been doing for two years, he hadn't been running assault courses. He was gasping, tearing sounds of air being hauled forcibly into his lungs, and Doyle couldn't make out what he said. Bodie repeated it. "Three at least, maybe more, coming after him. Rifles and handguns. Brady's not armed. Or hit." He'd apparently been frisking the man while Doyle scoured the blank facades of other buildings, watching for movement.

"Any chance they'll back off, now they see you've got friends?"

"No—no." Brady's voice was hoarse and harsh. Doyle glanced around at him momentarily. The other man's straight black hair was longish and disheveled, and his face was splotchy red, but he had managed to gain enough breath to speak. "They want me dead; they're not—" he coughed thickly, and spat—"not going to give up."

"Want you that bad?" Bodie asked.

"Yeah. They've got— I know—"

"Never mind what he knows," Doyle snapped.

"There's three of them that I can see, coming in, and unless you fancy us as Butch and Sundance, we're getting out of here *now*." He fired once more, hoping to at least wing the man peering from the broken window of the factory across the road. The man ducked back, and an answering shot from the building's shadow sprayed dirt into Doyle's face. Doyle spat it out and came to his feet. "Have to run for it. You know this area?"

"No—"

"Do they?" Bodie interrupted.

"No. I picked it be—"

"Never mind. If we're all running blind, we run the opposite way from them. Find some shelter, call for help... move!"



They'd talked about it once, when they'd started. Getting caught would mean the end of their jobs, maybe of their careers. But there was no question of stopping, of pretending that that sweaty, laughing tumble into bed hadn't happened, or hadn't mattered. They both knew that, when they rolled over and looked at each other, the next morning, and moved together for a long, open-mouthed kiss before they even spoke.



“Christ, Ray.”

“Yeah.” Doyle turned onto his back and pulled Bodie close with an arm around his shoulders. Bodie threw his own arm across Doyle’s chest, and began playing, idly, with his left nipple.

“Your breath’s foul, first thing,” Doyle told him conversationally.

Bodie stretched, flexing skin against Doyle’s skin. “You’ll get used to it.”

“Reckon so.”

The first time Bodie had shown up at Doyle’s door at quarter past six, he’d stood in the doorway and grinned at his bleary-eyed, scowling partner, who was holding his pajama trousers up with one hand while he rubbed at his face with the other. “Brushed me teeth, Mum,” Bodie had said sunnily, and slipped past, into Doyle’s flat, while Doyle was still gaping at him.

It was that day, an hour later, when Doyle’s bed was a wreck and the pajamas wadded up in a corner of the floor where he had gleefully kicked them, that they’d talked it out. If they got caught, they were out of a job. “So,” said Bodie complacently, “we don’t get caught.”

Doyle was lying on top of him, looking down into the blue eyes and wry black eyebrows; Bodie’s hands were square and warm on his back. “You think we can pull that off?”

“I know I’m not giving this up.” The tone was light, but Bodie’s hands tightened on him, hard, and they were both silent, listening to what Bodie had said.

Then Bodie kissed him, lightly, and the moment passed. “Besides,” he added, “I figure it’ll give us an edge, on the job. The better we know each other, the better we’ll work together, right?”

Doyle snorted softly. “Planning to propose that to Macklin, are you? And before every major op, the whole of CI5 can get together for an enormous cluster-fuck...”

“Christ, you’re disgusting,” Bodie told him, laughing. “No, I mean it. Just another reason to watch your arse, sunshine.”

“Oh, well,” answered Doyle, deadpan. “I’m all in favor of that.”

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“We were coming down the road, you know, between the buildings. I was leading, with Brady behind me; 4.5 was flanking us on the left, up on the grass.” Bodie’s voice was tight, but steady. “We reckoned we’d outdistanced them for the moment, and we were trying to angle back toward the car.”

“You hadn’t thought to call for backup?”

“RTs couldn’t raise anyone, sir. Out of range.” Cowley scowled at that, but he couldn’t dispute it. He gestured, sharply, for Bodie to go on.

“There was a loading dock on the left, big wide driveway cut into the hillside up to the side of the building. He was in there, keeping low; we didn’t see him until it was too late. He’d already fired when 4.5 shot him.”

“And what in God’s name were you doing, strolling along in plain view like that, 3.7? You’re supposed to be one of my top teams, and you damned near painted a target on Brady’s forehead for them! I ought to suspend the pair of you for sheer idiocy—”

“Look, sir—” Bodie was almost yelling back—“we were in the middle of a running fight, we did the best we could, if you don’t like it then bloody fire us but at least we’re still alive!” His fists were clenched, and he didn’t look at Doyle once.

Doyle wanted to shift in the bed, ease his leg a little; but still more he didn’t want to do anything that would remind either of them that he was there. He didn’t want to remember it himself. He lay there, breathing shallowly, trying not to see anything but the cracked and grainy ceiling, and listened to Bodie lie.

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He’d been surprised, a little, by how much he loved making love with Bodie. Not just that he loved it; he’d known he would, months before he actually did it. But by how much he liked being fucked. Being sucked was always wonderful, Bodie’s mouth bigger than a woman’s, able to take more of him; and jerking each other off had a companionable, matey feel that sometimes almost made him smile, and sometimes it was the best way to watch each other’s faces, slowly, making it last. Fucking Bodie was okay, but—not that he didn’t love Bodie, but for that he’d rather have a woman. But when Bodie fucked him...

It wasn’t just the prostate, or whatever. Curious, he’d done a little surreptitious research in the gay sex rags, and gathered that there was something up there, where he’d never particularly wanted to go exploring, that helped make it good for the bloke on the bottom. Sometimes he was pretty sure he could feel Bodie hitting it, sliding over it as he slid into him. That was nice, but it wasn’t what sent him so far over the moon.

Bodie, whispering to him, urging him to his knees and fitting warm and hard against his thighs and his backside, pressing in and filling him, full and hot. Caught suspended between his own palms flat on the bed and Bodie’s hands guiding his hips, able to feel nothing but the slow, agonizingly erotic movement of Bodie’s cock into him, he would start to tremble, panting harshly, his cock arching, aching, trying to fuck the empty air. Head hanging, arse raised, he could feel every



one of Bodie's fingers pressing him open, every inch of Bodie's cock as it filled him, and withdrew, and gave itself to him again; and untouched anywhere else, anchored only by the strong strokes in his arse and the strong fingers holding him steady, arousal would spiral wildly, crazily up, until he was dizzy with it, until he scarcely knew where he was, except that he was with Bodie. Bodie was fucking him, and he was begging for release, for anchorage, shaking violently as he was fucked, harder, harder still, and then Bodie's hand was there, grabbing his cock, slick and hard and stripping him from tip to root until he screamed, and Bodie's other arm clamped around his chest and Bodie's weight was against his back and Doyle bucked and spasmed in the strong hot grasp of his lover's arms, coming and coming, Bodie grappling him tight and safe as he writhed, racked by the terror and the glory of it all.



They were pressed against the side of yet another warehouse, peeling paint catching at their jackets, inching leftward toward its front end. Doyle was in the lead, with Brady between him and Bodie; inadequate cover, but the best they could give him. They seemed to have shaken pursuit for the moment, and the front of this building faced the road; by Doyle's mental calculation they had managed to work their way back to fairly close to where they'd begun, and if they could get to their car, they had a hope of getting out of this. The tires might have been shot out, but it wasn't likely that the IRA had taken the time to destroy the radio, and it was far more powerful than their RTs. A yell for backup, and another twenty minutes of luck, and Cowley might just be able to save the cost of their wreaths. Doyle grimaced; that kind of joke was more to Bodie's taste than his. He wished for a moment he could tell it to his partner. Maybe later. Then there was a small sound, just enough to register on his adrenaline-hyped senses, from in front of the building. Gun in his left hand, grateful for his skill there, he waved Bodie and Brady to stillness with his right, and very carefully, barely breathing, crept forward, crouched to minimize the chance of being seen and squinted around the corner.

The road was there, some twenty or so feet from the square front end of the warehouse. The ground was higher here against the building than at the road, and a driveway leading to the building's loading dock cut into the artificial hillside perhaps fifteen feet from where Doyle crouched. It was wide enough for two lorries to be parked side by side, its retaining walls rising from only a few inches high where the driveway met the road

to ten feet or so against the side of the building, where wide steel gates were rusted shut.

And on the grassy near side of the driveway's cut, just by its edge, stood a young man in a gray cotton jacket and black trousers, face pale and slightly freckled, a 9mm semi-auto ready in his hand as he scanned the road in both directions. Looking for them. Doyle ducked back behind the building's corner as the IRA agent turned toward him, and met Bodie's watchful inquiry. Silently, Doyle held up one finger, then mimed with his hands the sunken loading dock and the gunman's position beside it.

Bodie pursed his lips for a moment. Doyle knew what he was thinking. They had to surprise the man, take him out before he saw them. The shot would certainly alert his mates, but at least the odds would be better with one of them down. And the loading dock would give them a little shelter, a little cover. They could catch their breath for a moment, figure out which way the car was, where to go next.

He'd shoot; he was the better shot, and he was in front already. He crouched down a little again, and switched the Browning to his right hand. Behind him he could hear Brady breathing rapidly, and beyond sound or sense he could feel Bodie, waiting, ready. A deep, calming breath, and he leaned around and shot the man dead in one smooth motion, the corpse jerking and toppling into the driveway, and Bodie was already running for its temporary shelter, dragging Brady by one arm, as Doyle leapt up and followed.

There was a heap of rubble against the near wall of the cut, stones and broken bricks and rubbish dumped and left, rising nearly as high as the retaining wall itself. He saw it just as Bodie, ahead of him, jumped down onto it and skidded downward toward the pavement. One arm outflung for balance, Doyle followed him, a small avalanche of scree under his feet. Bodie hit bottom and shoved Brady forward, turning himself to reach back and grab for Doyle's arm, and as Doyle reached for his partner's hand something turned the wrong way under his left foot and he choked on a sickening wet snap as agony vomited up from his ankle and he felt his knees collapse as he screamed.

When he came to himself he was sitting on the ground, back against the retaining wall. It took him a moment to realize that he was facing the pile of rubbish he had come down; somehow he had gotten across the width of the driveway without realizing it. His legs were straight out in front of him, both hands clamped tight around his left thigh, just above the knee. He didn't know where his gun was.



