## **NANNY'S TEDDY TALES** AND OTHER BEDTIME STORIES: AN ABARENT ABEARATION GAEL X. ILE

"OH, COME ON, DOYLE, SHOW ME!"

"I've already told you, Bodie, you don't have a snowball's of seeing my teddy, so just give it a rest, will you?"

"But Doyle, we've been mates for years," Bodie shouted, breaking into a sprint to catch Doyle up. "I've stood by you—"

"Stood behind me, more like," Doyle muttered in response, breath clouding the air in front of him.

"Stood by you," Bodie repeated, loudly, startling an old wifey picking her way between the rills of slush and rivulets of ice, "even faced the Cow for you—" the militant feminist with the crew cut glowered at him, unnoticed, "I've even," he paused dramatically, "risked my life for you!"

Doyle, unfortunately, was in the process of dodging a homicidal taxi at this point and so missed the heartfelt and dramatic declamation.

Bodie caught up with him again, splashing both of them with the crusted black-grey slush as he grabbed Doyle by the arm, spun him around and neatly slid him off the pavement and into the kerb—just in time for the No. 9 to go past, right through the puddle. The big puddle. The one the size of the Red Sea but a hell of a lot colder. Shivering, Doyle glared at him, shaking off the offending grip and clinging slush whilst muttering dire invectives, not so much under his breath, but more at the top of his lungs. Unable not to hear the imaginative recital, the Salvation Army General offered to pray for his soul. We shall not record what reply was given to that, shall we now?

Bodie, meanwhile, being large of heart, having the courage of the bearded lion and the balls of a baboon, was still harping on in a most unangelic way. "C'mon, Doyle, it's not so much to ask, is it? I mean, it's not as if I want to do anything to your little teddy, is it? Just want to look, that's all."

Doyle stopped dead in his tracks, derailing a toddler from her pram and her mother from what

few wits Christmas shopping had left her. "Just look? Just look? After what happened with me bike, you expect me to believe you'll 'just look'? Last time I let you 'just look', I ended up with a Norton minus hubcaps and I still haven't worked out how the hell you bent the handlebars like that. Just look," he sneered, striding off confidently through the slush and across the black ice, sparing not a glance for poor Bodie slipsliding away in his wake. "I'll 'just' bloody 'look' you, mate. You can just keep your mitts and your beady little eyes off my teddy. And you can just shut up about it while you're at it and all."

Bodie, trained to resist enemy torture and defeat the dirtiest fighters the world had to offer, simply changed tactics. Pathos and guilt £3£3£3 hadn't worked, so now it was down to England's 47 best weapon, the one thing destined to always £3£3£3 bring the staunchest of Englishmen to heel. Bribery and corruption...

"I'll buy you these new handlebars you've been after."

"Oh, that's rich. You wouldn't get me new ones when you fucked the old ones up, but you'll buy new ones so you can get your paws on my teddy. Charmed, I'm sure."

A quick pause for thought, then—"I'll steal Murphy's collection of Dutch video nasties for vou."

That one didn't even get a response. Time for the big guns, then.

"I'll steal Cowley's collection of Swedish videos..."

"Cowley's collection of Swedish..." A flare of interest, then a look of disgust. "Nah. That's what you bought me off with last time, when you almost got me killed when you set fire to the bonnet of Cowley's car that day out at the Army training. Pack it in, Bodie. You're not getting my teddy."

By this time, they were at the corner where they should, by rights, have parted, Doyle to go

to his flat, Bodie to pick up his car and drive himself home. Bodie however, having absolutely no idea of what the welcome mat looked like when it was well and truly worn out, invited himself back to Doyle's place, using the unarguable logic of there being no food in his own flat, but Doyle's flat being where there was a mound of delectable delicacies. It was also, purely coincidentally and having no connection whatsoever with his decision, the home of the famous—but never seen—teddy.

And he *wanted* to see the teddy that would get Doyle to hang on to it, year after year, all the way through art school and the Met and into CI5. It had to be something very special indeed, and Bodie couldn't bear a mystery. Especially not when the mystery also promised to be the best source of slagging and blackmail he'd come across in years. He rubbed his hands in equal measures of glee and chill, wincing as the circulation returned to his fingertips, the blue beginning to fade. Unfortunately—or fortunately, depending on your bent—the blue was not about to fade from his language. In fact, it was just £3£3£3 getting started.

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"Come on, Ray," he mumbled round the last £3£3£3 of the After Eights that he'd unearthed from the kitchen cupboard, "what harm can it do to just let me see the bloody thing?"

> Doyle gave him an extremely old-fashioned look, accompanying it with an extremely modern two-fingered gesture.

> "But listen," this time mumbled round the last of the tangerines and said to Doyle's back, Doyle's front being busy with throwing together some semblance of a meal, "I'll make you an offer you can't refuse. If you show me your teddy, I'll tell you anything you want to know."

> That gave Doyle pause, then common sense kicked in and kicked the last remnant of gullibility out. "Oh, yeh, I believe you, mate. Thousands wouldn't, but I do. What is this, anyway?" He hefted the tray and went into the sitting room, plonking everything down on the coffee table, grabbing what he wanted for himself and leaving the mounded piles for Bodie to devour, which he did, and with an alacrity that made Doyle's head spin and stomach churn.

> "Toasted cheese with tomatoes," Bodie answered, looking at him decidedly askance as the last of the food was crammed into the space left

by his words, "with piccalilli and spring onions. And what're you asking me for? You're the one that made it."

A heartfelt, long-suffering sigh, more theatrical than real—rather like Bodie's promises. "Not the food, you great wally. This crap about me showing you my teddy and you telling me your darkest secret. As bad as a kid, you are." He twisted his face into a perfect replica of a snotty-nosed brat down the back of the bicycle shed, his voice going high and whiny. "You show me yours an' I'll show you mine."

"Tut, tut, Raymond, my boy. I'd never dream of doing a thing like that." A pause, just to make sure the next comment had the desired impact. "Wouldn't want to give you an inferiority complex, would I?"

"Inferiority—! I'll inferiority complex you, Bodie! Don't forget, I've seen you, mate, and you're nothing to write home about, are you?"

"Course not! You shock me, old chum, even suggesting that you'd write home about my manly accoutrements. What a thing to do to the poor Widow Doyle! Give her a fit of the vapours, that would."

Doyle snorted at him, well aware of his mother's many...men friends. "More like a fit of the giggles. She's used to better than you, mate." Another pause, this one to wait until Bodie had a mouthful of lager. "Not to mention bigger."

The result was most satisfying, even if it was disgustingly messy. "You're no priapus yourself, mate. Bigger! If I was any bigger, the only thing I'd be able to get it into would be the Mersey Tunnel."

"I thought that's what your last bird was?"

"Oh, hardy ha-ha, Ray. I," he did his Lord Bodie of the Manor House on the Moor routine, "at least had a bird, which is more than can be said for you, you pathetic little worm."

Doyle looked down at his jeans, and the overfilled crotch that tested the poor zip to its absolute limits. "Worm? Nah. Serpent, that's more me."

"Pull the other one, it's got bells on."

"The other one?" He made a great show of feeling himself, fingering both the delineation of his cock and the fecund swell of his balls. "Nah. Haven't got bells on one nor on either of the pair of them. Knew a bloke once, though, that had his scrote pierced."

"You what? He'd put an earring through his balls?" The wince was entirely untheatrical, Bodie's line of work having led to more than one knee in the balls. "Christ, the very thought brings tears to my eyes. Hang on a minute. How'd you get to see his balls? Have you," he minced, wrist suddenly broken and hand hanging limply, "been keeping thecrets from me, dahling?"

Laughing—"Shut up, Bodie. Nah, was when I was with the Drugs Squad. We had a sure tip about this bloke, but when we picked him up, we couldn't find a thing. So we had to strip search him and I was the lucky feller who got to check his bum, which is where I found the biggest butt-plug I've ever seen. And when he stood up, there it was. Crotch was all shaved, and he had this gold ring through the skin, right there," he pointed on himself, despite the fact that his denims rather spoiled the effect. "And," he went on, "he was tattooed as well."

"On his balls?"

Doyle leaned back in his chair, grinning happily at the falsetto squeak that had just erupted from Bodie. It wasn't often he managed to shock world-weary, done-it-all Bodie. "Not on his balls."

"Well? Come on, Ray, don't just leave me hanging. Where was he tattooed?"

A long, thirst-quenching drink of his lager, then a careful wiping of the mouth, then a glance from under lowered lashes. A few more moments, until Bodie was suitably on tenterhooks, and just barest seconds before his partner wrung his neck for him, and then he continued. "Not on his balls—"

"So you've said, Ray. Where the fuck was this bloke tattooed?"

"On his prick."

"You're having me on, aren't you?"

"Scout's honour. Honest, right along his prick. A blue serpent, all coiled. Until he got hard, anyway."

There was something in the way that was said. "See it, did you? When it wasn't all coiled, Ray?"

The longest pause of all.

"Yeh." Blunt with bravado, the challenge inherent in the single word. It could almost be heard, the unspoken and what're you going to do about it?

"Thought you were an honest copper. Offer to let him off if he let you fuck him, was that it?"

"Don't be so fucking insulting, Bodie. We're not all jungle rats, you know. And for your information, he started getting hard just standing there in front of us and then got really worked up when I had to look inside him the second time."

There was an edge between them now, beginning to cut into them, to sever the ties that they had been weaving between them. Time to joke, time to leaven the atmosphere, time to stick an elastoplast on this scratch before the air could get to it. "Bet he wasn't bigger than me, though."

Doyle snorted at this display of modesty. "Delusions of grandeur, that's you. A blue-arsed fly's bigger than you, Bodie."

"Is not!"

"Is too! Don't forget, I've seen you, mate."

"Oh, yeh, coming out of the shower when it's been bloody freezing. Any man'll shrivel away to nothing in that fridge they put our showers in. Bet I'm bigger than you, anyway."

"Not going by what's been revealed by the showers, not by a long chalk."

"Just cos you're permanently half-hard £3£3£3 doesn't mean to say you're bigger than me. Just 49 means," he sniffed derisively, "that you're not £3£3£3 getting as much as me and where I'm all relaxed and satisfied—"

"And tiny."

Bodie ignored that with the contempt it deserved. "And satisfied. You're running around like a dog on heat, desperate to shove it into anything. Should buy you a packet of polo mints. The little hole in the middle's just about right for you."

"Yeh? Well, you'd need a packet of polo *fruits*, wouldn't you, Bodie?"

"What's that supposed to mean?"

"Oh, get off it, Bodie. Every chance you get, you're checking all the blokes out—"

Discomfited, face reddening, shifting in his seat. "Natural curiosity to see if anyone's anywhere nearly as big as me."

"-calling me 'sweetheart' and feeling me bum up."

That was harder to dismiss, the unease beginning to creep up from Bodie's feet to hollow his belly. "Just messing about, that's all. Just a bit of harmless fun..." he hoped, oh, how he hoped. This joke had suddenly gone very seri-

ous, filling him with dread. They'd never mentioned sex between them before. That wasn't to say that they hadn't talked about sex: it would be an unnatural situation indeed for two such puerilely, prurient natures not to discuss sex, and at length, but they'd never mentioned sex that had anything to do with them, together, doing sex together, or feeling anything sexual. And the dread was abruptly settling on Bodie's shoulders, the dread that Doyle knew precisely what was behind all the matey questions and dirty jokes and camping. Typical of Doyle, though, to pick an evening of light-hearted fun to hit him between the eyes with this seriousness, this ripping open of the shroud he used to hide what was going on behind his ever-so-butch façade. He ground his teeth together, preparing himself for the worst, readying his denials and his jokes and all the things he could use to deflect Ray and keep them together. His palms were wet, his upper lip beaded with the cold dampness of fear, a trickle of sweat tickling its way down the valley of his shoulder-blades.

"Harmless fun? That kind of harmless fun £3£3£3 could get you shoved up against a wall and raped 50 in a dozen pubs in London, mate. You ought to £3£3£3 be careful what you do, you know, Bodie."

> And the voice was nearer, harder, colder, carrying a threat like the snow clouds that had loured over the city, all the playfulness fled, deathly seriousness oppressing him. Frantically, Bodie cast around for a joke, a smart alec comment, anything that could get them back to matey companionability, but Doyle was still going, not giving him a chance, bulldozing him.

> "D'you know why you ought to be careful what you do, Bodie? Cos if you don't, you could get yourself in a lot of trouble. You could give a bloke the idea that you're coming on heavy with him, and he might not like that. Might even put your prick—" a hand, flashing white in the lamplight, clamping down around his cock, pressing the black fabric in and around him, fingers moving until his balls were caught up in the strong grip "—in a sling for you, mightn't he? Or," hard, lethal knee coming to press between his thighs, threatening gelding and pain, "he might," sudden move of the hand, the grip loosening, fingers cupping, volte-facing the atmosphere with dizzying speed, sitting room become seraglio, "take you up on what he sees as an offer,

mightn't he? And what," voice gone soft, far softer than Bodie's prick, "would you do," breath brushing his lips, pink flicker of tongue "then? Eh, Bodie?"

Staring at the mouth so close to his own, his nerves a-jangle, Bodie moistened his own lips. And found his tongue touching Ray's. His mouth fell open to let his groan of needing out, letting Ray invade his body, letting them fall easily into a kiss that was hard and demanding. He was making noises, he knew, the kind of sounds that would be embarrassing in the light of day—but this was hardly the light of day. This was nighttime, with its veils and secrets and permissive indulgence. This was fantasy, not reality, for in reality it could never be so simple. Ray-confronting him for his passions, his ill-disguised passions, bringing what he had believed to be secrets out to be aired like so much dirty linen? And then doing nothing less than kissing him, wanting him, coming to him without a word of condemnation for his lust-filled deceits? Oh, no, this could not be his reality. And if it were reality, then death would be a minor sting compared to the pain of rejection that was sure to follow. For Ray to be accepting him like this, seeking him out like this, tongue delving into his mouth like this, oh, this would have to be one of Ray's infamous revenges, that cruel streak of his tied up in the pretty ribbon of desire only to hide the barbed noose that awaited behind. Yes, that would be it. That would be how his Ray would do it, this man who had never once forgotten an enemy, had never once forgotten who owed him, and for what reason. Ray would never let him off so easily. It had to be a trick to top the tricks he had played these past few months, with his pretence of 'just good mates' messing about. His mind was reeling, but his body had no such uncertainty, hands groping under fabric to find the subtlety of skin and the voluptuosity of nipple rising from the warmth of hair. Doyle wriggled, and his lap was suddenly overflowing with the heat of a body, all arms and legs and kisses, covering him, enveloping him.

Ensnaring him.

Setting him up for the kill, trapping him into making the final move, the one that would declare him as more than merely curious or randy. The one that would declaim him lover. There wasn't even the faintest echo of their humour

left, all gone, chased out by the sickening dread of what Doyle was trying to do to him. Fear flashed into anger, as it is wont to do when whipped by insecurity and hurt, so that he heaved upwards, toppling Ray off him, tipping him onto the coffee table, from whence he slowly slid to the floor.

"What the fuck was that in aid of?" Doyle demanded, wiping his lips, not of blood, but of the wetness of their kisses.

"Isn't that my line, Doyle? Shouldn't I be asking you that? I mean, one minute we're just sitting here and the next thing I know, you've plonked yourself in my lap and stuck your tongue down my throat. You're the one that's got some explaining to do," he paused for breath and to gather his vitriol into one globule of bitterness, "mate."

Doyle stared up at him, dignity not in the least bit tattered by lying there on the floor, mouth swollen from kisses, trousers half-open and that sight shocked Bodie, for he didn't even remember doing that, hadn't realised that he'd been so far gone in passion that he didn't even know what he was doing—and his shirt splayed and dishevelled, nipples peaking upwards. Bodie stared back down at him, benumbed with his own frantic effort to hold onto his own dignity, desperate not to break in front of Doyle, desperate not to be found out in his weakness. Even with all that, his cock was still aching, his hands still itching to reach out and hold, his mind screaming at him to take what was on offer. But he dared not, wasn't about to set himself up for the fall of Doyle's laughter and Doyle's vicious tongue and...

"You berk. You absolute fucking berk. You've got to be the biggest idiot I've ever come across in my entire life, Bodie. Or maybe I should call you Willie, eh? Nice little boy's name for a man who's a total prat. Can't ever let your pride go, can you? You've always got to turn it into some kind of contest, haven't you?" He got to his feet, not moving away from Bodie, sitting himself down on the much-abused coffee table, peeling shoes and socks off as he kept on talking. "And if it isn't your stupid pride, it's that fucking chip on your shoulder. One or the other, you can't just jump in there, oh, no, not you. You've got to have proof, you've got to have time. You've got to behave like a maiden fucking aunt."

"Wouldn't be a maiden aunt if she was fucking, would she?" Bodie's voice was as stiff as a leg in plaster, and as ungainly. Nothing more than a show of being all right, of not being thrown by any of this. Of knowing what the hell was going on.

"Well, you've done your fair share of fucking, but you're still fat-arsing around like a maiden aunt, aren't you? Oh, sit down, will you? You look like Nelson's Column standing there on your dignity."

Bodie sat, mainly because it was easier than standing—and it let him see Ray's face, gave him a chance to see what was going on behind the words. "You setting me up, Ray?" he heard himself ask.

"Only for bed, Bodie. That's it. Come on, don't look at me like that. Look, it's as plain as the nose on your face that you've fancied me from the word go, right? And I fancy you just as much. The only reason I came on to you tonight was," he bent forward, taking Bodie's shoes off him, tossing socks under the table, "it seemed like the right moment." He glowered up at him, all hair and daring, "And don't you tell me I'm £3£3£3 wrong, either."

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Bodie was getting used to these roller-coaster £3£3£3 changes, the sudden alterations in mood. He eased back in his seat, allowing a little sprite of delight dance inside him as it began dawning on him that maybe it really was as simple as a dream. Perhaps it was as simple as Ray wanting him as much as he wanted Ray. He could get to like this particular reality...

"I never disagree with a man who's got his gun on," he whispered, flicking a finger at the article in question, smiling when nimble fingers hauled it off, sending it under the table with the socks. "That's better. Ray..." question colouring his voice a watery grey, "This really is genuine, isn't it? I mean, you really mean to go through with this. You're not going to leave me hanging, or make a fool of me or..."

Ray's eyes were glinting with a mixture of humour and ire, but Bodie launched into more speech before Doyle could deliver his comments.

"It's just...well, it's just that, well, I like you, and I do fancy you—fancy you something chronic, to tell you the truth—but..."

"But it'd hurt you if I were just winding you up?"

"Yeh. And if you go on with this now, Ray, and then I find out you didn't mean any of this, I'll kill you. I promise you, Ray, I'll kill you."

Doyle knew his Bodie, knew when threats were red warning flags and when they were simple statements of facts. He held himself very still, listening, watching warily, held in thrall by the sheer strength of this man, whose power equalled his.

"This is it, Ray, point of no return, mate. You can back out now, and we'll just toss all this off as a joke that got out of line, pretend it was nothing more, nothing less. But if you keep up with me, if you sleep with me, and if we start this... God help me, Ray, if you pull a fast one on me, then I'll kill you. If you're messing me about..."

Even Cowley had been known to back down from this mood of Bodie's, but Ray Doyle was nothing if not Bodie's match.

"You know, you really should take one of these assertiveness class things, Bodie. Learn to express yourself and stop kowtowing to everyone around you. Anyway, d'you think I'd go around £3£3£3 risking my job just to risk my neck winding you 52 up? No chance, mate. I leave doing stupid things £3£3£3 to you. Now," he got to his feet, started taking his clothes off, Bodie's eyes widening with every inch of flesh uncovered, "I'll give you your last chance, sunshine. Now or never. You either take me up on my offer," his thumbs lingered under the waistband, "or we can just..."

> Bodie grabbed him, stoppering his mouth with his tongue and pulling him in close, until they were tangled together in an ungainly heap in the wide chair. Bodie couldn't believe his luck, not that he was about to question it right now, not when it seemed that this time reality was actually going to be better than fantasy. His inherent doubts struggled to be heard, but he gagged them, filling himself instead with the intoxication of holding Ray, of pulling him in close, until they were chest to chest. Hands were denuding him of his shirt, plucking at his trousers, and he joined the contortions to doff his clothes, never allowing his mouth to leave Ray. Mouth to mouth, or his lips on Ray's skin, tasting him, sucking at him, it didn't matter, as long as he didn't let go. He didn't want to lose this, not for a second, not when the sensation was washing over him until he felt like a barrel go

ing over Niagara. A child in swaddling clothes had never been held more tightly nor cherished more dearly as he was, with Ray all around him, the lithe body sitting astride his lap, lush backside a home for his cock to nestle in. He cradled Ray, his hands cupping buttocks, his chest rubbing against Ray's, his mouth on a level with the vulnerability of Ray's throat. He sucked him there, leaving his mark, making the blood blossom under his tongue and lips until Ray was moaning, rubbing his face in Bodie's hair, his hands kneading and roaming all over Bodie's back.

Feet braced firmly on the short pile of the carpet, Bodie balanced himself on the edge of the chair, the hard edge cutting into him just another in the cornucopia of sensation. He was a convexity of muscle that was supporting Ray, their bodies curving together perfectly, with Ray kneeling astride him, pressing them close together within the confines of the upholstery. Bodie breathed deeply of the scent of them mingling, his sweat with Doyle's, his musk rising to blend with Ray's, all of it quite, quite wonderful to him. He licked, the movement suddenly delicate amidst the rawness of passion, and Ray went still, concentrating his entire being on that one single inch of him that was being caressed. Bodie hands stilled on him also, as his tongue moved, roving the hot flesh, lapping at the delicacy of fresh sweat, sucking on the hair of chest and underarm. His erection was shouting at him, pleading with him to touch it, to squeeze it, stroke it, anything, but best of all, to bury it in Ray's body that was snuggled up so close and tight to it. Bodie shifted again, unable to stay still, and Ray's eyes flew open, head dropping back, exposing the long column of his neck.

And Bodie, looking, thought of how it would feel to fill that throat with the length of his cock, then the thought of that shot through him, making him want even more. Making him want the deliciousness of being buried in someone else's body, of plundering someone else's flesh, of being part of someone else.

Ray. This wasn't someone else, this was Ray, who was already so much a part of him. This was Ray, and he was already under Ray's skin. To be part of him...might be asking too much. It had been so terribly, frighteningly easy for them to start this sex between them, and any-

thing so easily started, anything so easily given, might be just as readily shucked as a snake's useless skin. But how he wanted it! His back arched, without him telling it to, forcing his cock hard against Ray's belly, forcing Ray's cock to butt at him with single-minded intensity. Ray's hands were on him too, gripping him with the same commanding insistence. The grip, and the words, penetrated him the way he wanted to penetrate Ray: in a single plunging stroke, filling him until he was overflowing, bursting with the glory of it all.

"Fuck me," he heard, in his ears and his mind. "Fuck me, hard, come on, Bodie, shove it up me, fuck me, fuck me..." He heard that in his body. "Come on, you bastard, don't make me wait, waited long enough, come on, love me, love me..." He heard that in his heart.

He stopped Doyle's undulation, wrapping his arms around the slimmer body, pulling him in so close, his heart was beating against Ray's. "What'd you say?"

Eyes glassy with passion, Doyle stared at him for a moment, utterly blank of anything but his feelings. And that, was all the explanation Bodie needed, answering every question that had threatened him with its doubts. It really was as simple as all that, as simple as Doyle facing him with all the camping and flirtation; facing him not with rejection but with the gumption to do something about it. So simple, so simple that it had never ever occurred to him that it might even be possible. Ray, in love with him.

As he was with Ray.

Fingers burying themselves in Ray's hair, tongue burying itself in Ray's mouth, he closed his eyes until he could see the thought written on his mind. Him, in love. With Ray. So simple, really. So terribly simple, to love when one is loved in return. So simple, to face that fear of loving when there was someone that he knew he could trust. Ray'd made it plain that this was no vicious one-upmanship, made it plain that it was something he wanted as much as-no, more! flashed across his inner eye-Bodie himself did. So simple, and so right, that they should have come to love each other. Made such perfect sense, considering how they lived and worked. Like a marriage, Cowley had said, and that old boot knew more of life than either one of them ever would.

Yes, he thought, a vast calm rising in him, counterpoint to the frenzy of passion that was jangling his nerves. Us, together, properly. No holds barred. Not even, he thought, hands skimming Ray's spine, this one.

"You want me to fuck you, Ray?" he whispered, although he knew the answer. He wanted, suddenly and quite desperately, to hear it again.

"Yeh..." long drawn out, on a sigh of pleasure as Ray dragged his cock through the line of hair that stood out, stark black, on the whiteness of Bodie's belly.

Certain questions still needed answering, before they could go on, no matter what their bodies were squirrelling together to do. "Been fucked before, have you?" he asked, thumb circling delicate flesh,

"Oh, yeh," Doyle groaned, pressing back, letting Bodie's arms support his weight as he tried to entice the broad thumb inside.

"So I see, sunshine. Oh, you are hungry for it, aren't you? And you know what this is all about, don't you, Ray?" this last as his thumb eased inwards. "No need for us to go ferreting around in the bog for some cream, is there? £3£3£3 Fuck, but you're perfect, Ray. Come on, lean 53 back a bit more, up on your knees a bit, let me £3£3£3 get my prick wet." With Doyle curving over him, thigh muscles quivering, mouth covering Bodie with biting kisses, Bodie spat into his hand, using the saliva to whet his cock like a knife. He took Ray's weight on his hands, holding him up while Ray reached down to grab Bodie's cock and guide it, quickly, too quickly to his hole. There was a keening cry as Ray lowered himself, fighting both Bodie's strength and the tightness of his own body, but there was no denying him. As Bodie entered him, Ray still guided him, muscle dilating and flesh parting until Bodie was completely inside him.

Awed, Bodie watched his face, measuring every change of sensation that was engraved there. He watched as the initial pleasure turned to pain, then as that pain burned out and the pleasure returned, transforming Doyle's face, bringing the translucence of ecstasy to him. Watched, as the sweat sprang out to bead his skin, and as muscle flexed. Watched, until the sweetness of being clenched tightly inside Ray's body drove him to move, to thrust upwards, even though he could barely move. Ray, however, was

not constrained by the weight of a man on top of him, and so he began to lift himself up on his knees, rising up until it was only the tip of Bodie's cock that was still in him. Bodie hissed his pleasure as Ray lowered himself, forging them together again, encompassing him in the heat of another body, devouring him completely. Again and again he was absorbed, his cock caressed and Ray's body held him tighter than his own fist ever could. This was better than anything he'd ever known before, male or female, no-one had ever touched him so deeply.

He'd never touched anyone so deeply, either. It was there on Ray's face, and in the flush that stained him, and in the marks of passion that Bodie's mouth had left on him. It was there, most of all, in the rapt expression on his face, as if he was folded in on himself, savouring nothing of life but the feeling of having Bodie inside him. Bodie fastened his mouth to Ray's nipple, biting and sucking, trying to fill his mouth as he filled Ray's body. He wanted to kiss him, but to do that, he'd have to withdraw, separate them and he couldn't, absolutely couldn't do that. £3£3£3 Instead, he clenched his hands on Ray's waist, **54** using his strength to control the rhythm, push-£3£3£3 ing them faster, making Ray groan with the pleasure of it, pumping him up and down.

Orgasm was gathering inside his belly, with Ray's cock bumping the outside of him there, begging for his attention, begging for release. Bodie thrust up harder, fucking Ray, Ray rising up on his knees, the long, lean muscles of his thighs trembling, then Bodie grabbing him, his own strength and the weight of Ray's body plunging him down until Bodie was sunk in him up to the hilt, his thighs sticky against Ray's arse, his hands clutching at flesh, his mouth open and ravaging on Ray's chest. Bodie held him there, held him still, while he pulsed upwards into him, tiny, small movements that rubbed him with exquisite finesse on the sweet bump of gland buried inside. Once, twice, he did that, shivering over every inch of his body as he felt the tremor start inside Ray, felt the ripple of orgasm in Ray, spreading outwards to him like a stone dropping in a pond. He didn't hear himself, nor Ray, didn't hear what they said, nor the roughness of their voices as they said it. Didn't hear the words of devotion lap from him, waves in echo of the rippling effect of their pleasure. He didn't need to hear it, for he already knew how he felt about this man in his arms. And he had seen, there, on Ray's face, just how much Ray felt about him. As the intensity faded, his hands were broad on Ray's strong back as he gentled him with caresses and his mouth was soft and sweet on Ray's face as he declared himself without another word being spoken.

For a long time, it seemed to them, lost in each other, they sat like that, although in real time it was only a matter of minutes before the cramping of muscle and the awkward crush of the chair made them move. There was a flurry of motion, of straightening of limbs, of rearranging themselves so that both could breathe and neither would fall.

In the end, Ray got to his feet, and with that separation, unease crawled in. Bodie looked away as Ray bent to gather clothes, made fumbling youth by the vast vulnerability he had just displayed to this man with such shocking lack of caution. One thing, to know it was all so simple, in the throes of passion, another to apply that lack of complication to the complexities of real life. Butterfingered, he fumbled around for something to say, for the right thing to say, for something that wouldn't spoil this, or turn it into something that would fizzle and die. Although it wouldn't die, not for him. He'd known that the minute he'd seen inside himself to the bed-rock well of emotion he had for this man. And he thought he'd seen the self-same certainty in Ray, but that had been in lust and he knew how men lied when they were on the verge of getting what they so desperately wanted.

After all, how many times had he told some girl that he loved her, just to get to fuck her? Or just to make it a bit special for himself, a dream come true? Oh, he knew how often and how well men lied when sex was at stake. And he was too insecure to believe what his own eyes had shown him: there were too many women—and men, for that matter—in his own past who'd seen love and devotion all over his face, when they were lost in lust. He jumped, startled, when fingers touched his belly. Ray's fingers, gathering up his seed where the heat of Bodie's body was turning the cloudy white into translucence. Fascinated, Bodie watched him, entranced by the beauty of this man as

he tasted his own semen, licking his fingertips with the delicacy of a courtesan.

"Saltier than usual," Doyle murmured. "Must be your sweat, sunshine, mixed in with me."

"Yeh?" Bodie hesitated a moment, then did something he'd never quite cared to do before: he dappled his fingers in the cloying semen, bringing it to his mouth, taking it inside, tasting another man. And finding that he didn't particularly like it, although it was definitely a taste to which he could become very accustomed. Eyes fixed on Ray's, he gathered some more cum, licking his fingers lasciviously, making a meal of the tiny fragment that was left.

Doyle exuded confidence and contentment, taking hold of the moment, handling it deftly, moulding this new sexual and emotional dimension until it fitted perfectly into the fabric of their partnership. "You know something, Bodie, I think we'd better adjourn to the bedroom. You could break your back on that chair, with what I have in mind to do to you."

"Promises, promises," Bodie said, his tone aggrieved, his face alight with anticipation as he followed a naked Doyle into Doyle's bedroom, his hands itching to grasp those buttocks as they teased him into the other room, wholeheartedly embracing the quiet settling back into what they had always been, singing inside at the way everything was clicking together with such pleasing finality. "Here, speaking of promises, you were going to show me your teddy."

"When did I promise that, eh? Anyway, anything I said was under duress, to get you into bed with me, so none of it counts, does it?"

The covers were turned back for him, but Bodie grabbed Doyle before he could hide himself away in the bed. He didn't want to stop being able to see Ray, not yet. The way he was feeling, he admitted to himself wryly, Ray might never get to put clothes on again in his life. "Not so fast, sunshine. You said you'd show me your teddy if I told you my deepest, darkest secret. So where's the teddy then? Come on, where's this teddy bear that you've carried with you half your life?"

"Teddy bear?" Doyle stared at him with patently honest confusion. "What teddy bear?"

"What d'you mean, what teddy bear? Your fucking teddy bear, that's what fucking teddy bear I mean."

"Bodie, I haven't had a teddy bear since my old Rupert died when I was seven and me and Mum buried him down the allotment." Realisation lit his eyes like Oxford Street at Christmas and the laughter gurgled from him. "Oh, Christ, that bloody Murphy, I'll kill him! The teddy in question, Mr. Bodie," he said, in his best boys-in-blue voice, "is the one I nicked when I was 14. Stolen, I might add, from the woman two doors down, the night— " his head disappeared into the wardrobe, accompanied by sundry noises of rustling and riffling before he emerged again, a small, extremely tattered carrier bag in his hand, "-I lost my virginity. This, you stupid sod, is my teddy."

And it was. A froth of powder blue chiffon and ribbons, with a few feathers still clinging round the décolletage.

"That's never a teddy—they're baby dolls!" Bodie yelped, astounded by the evening's second unexpected turn of events.

"Is too a teddy! She was a Yank, married to one of their servicemen over here. An' if she wanted to lead me astray showing me what she £3£3£3 called her teddy, who was I to argue?"

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"You were fourteen? And she fitted this?" £3£3£3 Bodie looked up at him with new respect—this had to be at least a 38D. He felt a proper fool, though, considering what he had thought—a grown man, an ex-copper who was tougher than old boots, still clutching his beloved teddy to him? He deserved the snickering laughter Ray was covering him with. He pasted on a look of fatuous adulation over the genuine adoration he felt, even if the little bugger was being such a pain. "Oh, Raymond, darling," he simpered, proffering the frills, "wear it for me, darling, do."

When Doyle had picked himself up off the floor and regained some of his composure, hysterics subsiding to mere hiccoughs, Bodie found himself taken firmly in hand and dragged by the—firming quite nicely—prick to the bed. "Get in, you great berk, and let me at you. Teddy!" he snorted. "As if I'd have one *or* wear one, American or otherwise."

Bodie pulled him in close, abruptly impatient with the light-hearted talk and needful of Ray, kissing him with a quiet intensity that stole both their breaths away and stole Ray's heart.

"Hang about," was muttered at him, somewhere in the vicinity of his ear, where a tongue had been so busy turning his knees to jelly. "You said you'd told me your deepest, darkest secret. I must've missed that bit, been—" an indrawn breath as Bodie's hand found the hardness of cock and Ray's finger found the suppleness of flesh that was willing to part for him, "—otherwise occupied. So what was this godawful secret of yours then, Bodie?"

And Bodie found that he could actually say it, when it was true and meant something, not just a lie to spread someone's legs. "Not sure you're old enough to hear it, sunshine. It's really awful, enough to make even Cowley's hair curl."

"I'm a big—" Bodie's hand fisted around him, pumping him, proving him right, "—boy now, I'll cope."

Bodie held his face very still for a moment, so that they could see each other, so that this first time said in truth could be remembered and marked, before he closed his mouth over Ray's, sealing them together.

"My deep dark secret, sunshine? I love you." And he did, even if Ray would never understand about Pooh-Bear still tucked away in the bottom of his wardrobe...

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