

# IN THE PUMPKIN IN'TEREST

## BY THE HAG

Load of Yank cobblers.” Bodie flicked the TV off and sprawled back against the pillows. “Speaking of which, what are you going as for Stacey’s Halloween bash this year? Party-mad, that bird. Halloween, Thanksgiving—I suppose when she goes back to America she’ll have ’em celebrating Guy Fawkes and the Queen’s birthday.”

“I’m on that arms dump obbo,” Doyle said gloomily, snuggling under the covers as if he already felt the impending chill. “Have to go on your own, won’t you?”

“No, I won’t.” Bodie looked pleased with himself. “Anson’s relieving you. Cleared it with the Cow and everything.”

“Anson? Does he know yet?”

“Volunteered,” Bodie said innocently. “Delighted to perform an act of simple kindness.”

Narrowed green eyes contemplated him distrustfully over the edge of the duvet. “I’ll find out, you know.”

“Course you will, pumpkin-fish. Think I’ll go as a vampire this year. Evening dress, set of those pointy teeth, tasteful trickle of blood down the chin.”

“All over that frilly shirt? Need a cloak, too. Why do vampires ponce about in all that get-up anyway?”

“Well, can you see Dracula in pinstripes and a bowler?”

“Definitely. The Old Vampire of Threadneedle Street, Bank of England to a T. All right, you go as a vampire and I’ll be your intended victim, very kinky. Wear a garlic g-string. You can bite me when they judge the costumes, and I’ll whip a set of fangs into me cakehole and—”

“Might not want to turn you into one of the clan, mate,” Bodie objected. “Just have you for elevenses till you’re empty, then get you refilled at the blood bank. Can’t all be vampires, can we? Very fussy who we let in the crypt.”

“If you bite me, you vamp me, or you’ll be vampiring with vacant gums, me old Fledermaus. How fast does it work? Maybe I ought to do a quick change into posh clothes too so they’ll know.”

“Just go as a stripper and have done with it: feathers and sequins, couple of twirling tassels. Well, three. If they stick money down your drawers we can—”

“We? Planning to live off my immoral earnings, are you? Anyway, with my luck they’d load me down with pennies. Could say I was a cut-price Zeus, being a shower of ex-copper. Want to be Leda?”

“That was the swan one, you prat. Anyway, I want to be a vampire. Might take it up full time. You could too after I bite you.”

“Tell Cowley we can’t cross running water or go out days. Bats don’t need cars: think of the petrol economy. He’ll love it.”

“No need for meal breaks: suck a little blood, all set.”

Doyle’s lips curved in a wanton grin. “Rather suck...”

“Get chucked out of the vampires’ union, bolshie ideas like that!”

“Nah, we’d knock ’em undead with our brilliant innovations.”

“Have to get a king-size coffin.” Bodie pounced and wrestled Doyle onto his back. “Fancy getting impaled on my stake?”

“Medium rare, is it? Supposed to go through the heart, anyway.”

“Y ou still got one? The Cow flogged mine to science years ago. See if I can reach it via the scenic route. Don’t mind a few fried onions and mushrooms along the way, do you?”

“Y our lifelong dream, that: a fuck and a three-course meal all in one go. The single solitary soddin’ poem you ever wrote me—”

“Always gets you going, doesn’t it?” Bodie took a deep breath.

“Don’t you bloody start— Mmmf—!!”

With a swiftness that would have brought tears of joy to Macklin’s eyes, Bodie had stuffed a fistful of duvet into the protesting mouth and was triumphantly chanting:

“Ray and chips,  
Ray and beans,  
Ray and bacon  
And no jeans.

“Ray and beer,  
Ray and malt;  
Ketchup, vinegar,  
And salt.

“Ray and custard,  
Ray and cream,  
Raymond Swiss roll  
In my dream.

“See,” he concluded complacently with a final lascivious writhe, “always works. Wait till you hear *Ode to a Transport Caff*—won’t get it down for weeks.”

Doyle had worked free of the gag. “That’s

just my gorge you feel risin’, you dumb crud.” He wrapped his arms round Bodie’s neck. “Go on, then, if it’ll shut you up. Know what, though—vampires can’t kiss in the sunlight either.”

“One smiling day, sweetheart. Steak-and-chips-heart.” Bodie offered an enthusiastic preview. “Who needs sunlight?”

“Y eah, well, be a good smiling vampire and give us a bit of a nibble first. And KY, not HP Sauce, thanks very much.”

“Or,” said Bodie a while later, stretching with drowsy satisfaction, “never mind vampire bats—what about Batman?”

“Hmm?” Doyle roused from a doze. “Aren’t we asleep yet? I’ll be him. Y ou’ll have to be Robin. Really fancy you with bare legs in those kinky red ankle boots.”

“Me? Y ou’re the one used to wear red shoes, mate. Looked like Dorothy when she’d just got chucked out of Oz. No wonder they shot you: probably expected you to start hurling boomerangs and koalas any minute.”

“Well, look at you, dark hair like Robin; pity to hide that incredibly handsome face with anything more than that little eye mask. I could pad out an all-over costume to look musclebound and the cowl thingie would hide most of me ugly mug. Elementary, my dear Bodie. And tell you what, we’ll let the Old Man be Alfred.”

“Let him be Robin. No trouble keeping anyone’s hands off the Cow in little green trunks. I’ll be Superman, won’t need a mask at all. Think Betty would like to be Lois Lane?”

“Kate Ross,” sighed Doyle, “as Catwoman. Here, know what I’ve been thinking?”

“Ignorance is bliss?” Bodie suggested optimistically.

“Listen, Blissful, what does Superman need all those muscles *for*? I mean, already got the strength, hasn’t he? Doesn’t need to overcome resistance. And the way he flies—reckon it must be a sort of controlled super-fart, like a jet engine up his arse. Like when

you've been piggin' down the baked beans."

"Vulgar mind, sunshine," Bodie said disapprovingly. "Anyway, you told me beans are healthy. So, vampire and victim, is it?"

"Think I'll wear the pirate clobber," Doyle decided. "Look much better in it than Anson did. Be the victim too, if you like. Dracula meets Long John Silver."

"Remember the hat got all squashed when you made me walk the plank off the ironing board. If you hadn't got so carried away with that perishing cutlass—"

"Not like you to get upset about a prick in the bum. Bit of a jolly roger, that was. Get another hat. Shame to waste the..."

Bodie smiled up at the ceiling with bland self-congratulation.

"Y ou treacherous bastard!" Doyle accused. "Y ou gave it back! Shouldn't have left it at your place. Never liked it, did you?"

"If you hadn't insisted on perching the damn thing on the wardrobe every time you wanted to be Peter Pan molesting Captain Hook. Might do something for your perverted exhibitionistic tendencies, a deceased parrot sizing up your wedding tackle, but it was starting to give me the—"

"Thought your rape and pillage technique was getting a bit half-hearted," Doyle acknowledged.

"Well, kept feeling old Polly was knocking points off my score. Like figure skating."

"Always thought she was cheerin' me on. Full marks." Doyle looked smug. "Gave you the droopy willies, did she?"

"God, how did I ever get mixed up with you? Used to have all these nice refined birds."

"Was a nice refined parrot. At least Anson

should give me a return game for it. Shouldn't have bet a borrowed parrot in the first place. Not really clothes, is it?"

"Don't give me that. Had your eye on it from the start. Didn't try to get Anson out of his frillies, did you?"

"Purely aesthetic. Anyway, take a man's bird away, you have to be magnanimous. Y ou can give 'im the hat back if it's no good, but I'm keeping the cutlass and eye patch."

"Actually Polly wasn't all that refined." Bodie grinned. "Anson's auntie's going to give him stick when he hands it over—got a nasty attack of moth."

"Caught it off your bedspread." Doyle looked slightly mollified. "All right, I'll go as a priapismic monster. Here, how's this?" He retrieved a sock from the untidy pile beside the bed and improvised a posing pouch.

"Hope that's your sock, sunshine. What are you supposed to be, then? A gents' hosiery fetishist?"

"Feller with a twelve-inch prick."

Bodie yawned. "Don't get it."

"Y ou get it often enough, mate." He lay back and squinted admiringly at his costume-in-progress. "Well, look, what do you expect to find inside a sock?"

"A f— Oh, for pity's sake, Ray!" Bodie plucked the black cotton handful away and dropped it onto Doyle's face. "Put a sock in it and go to sleep." He switched off the lamp.

"Reckon I'd win first prize, though?"

"Disqualified on a technicality." Bodie intercepted the returning sock and immobilised Doyle with an enveloping hug. "Haven't you heard? We've gone metric." ∞