

NANNY'S TEDDY TALES AND OTHER BEDTIME STORIES
PEEK-A-BODIE
M. FAE GLASGOW

NOT that he'd ever admit it to any of his old cronies on the Drug Squad, but Christ, it could be boring working here. CI5, all derring-do and heroics, that's what everyone thought it was, gun battles in the streets, glamorous foreign spies, hush-hush diplomacy. Hah! What it was, he thought to himself, industriously etching a lewd and lascivious picture in the dark brown tea stain that lined Murphy's mug, was hours and hours and hours of sitting around waiting, with nothing to do but feel his muscles turn to lard and his brain to porridge.

With a great humph of boredom, he admitted that he had put in every detail that could possibly be added to his work of art. Salt etching in tea mugs, now that was something he was willing to bet they hadn't thought of at art school. Took CI5 to teach a man an art like this. He dusted the salt off the tip of his biro, dumping the now ruined pen into McCabe's jacket pocket where it could seep its blue blood all over everything. Serve the bastard right for nearly landing him in it the other night after McCabe's routine suspect pick-up. He'd had to do some quick talking to cover his tracks on that one—still wasn't sure if Cowley had believed his tale of using his own time to follow up a lead. Shite, it didn't really matter at all whether the Old Man really believed him or not. Any man—not that you could dismiss Cowley as just 'any man'—who knew what his old Career Assessment teacher had said to him in third form was going to know why he hadn't a snowball's of getting beyond lowly DC level in the Police. Nah, didn't matter if the Cow believed him or not; what mattered was that he'd given the old buzzard enough room for doubt that he could choose not to suspect his agent. It was the traditional double standard that had built an Empire: you could do and be anything you wanted, as long as you didn't get caught. Or as

long as you didn't put the boss on the spot, force him to recognise some truths best left unsaid. Force him to fire you, the 'love that dare not speak its name' strictly illegal in Her Majesty's Service, regardless of how things had changed for the plebeian masses.

He chuckled to himself, fingertip delicately brushing off a grain of salt that was clinging with such desperation to the spread-legged vision in Murphy's mug. If everyone who had fiddled around a bit got fired, there wouldn't be anyone in Her Majesty's Service. Wasn't called Service of the Queen for nothing, was it? God, but if McCabe had come into the club ten minutes earlier, he'd've been for the high jump. No chance that Cowley could ignore one of his own having it off in the back room, not even when it was the old Club that all the ones with 'delicate' jobs frequented at some point in their lives. Wouldn't do, wouldn't do.

Careless, that was how to describe him these days, bloody careless. A molotov cocktail of desperation, randiness and being lulled to sleep by a false sense of security. And, his mind gouged him in the ribs, don't forget the loneliness.

As if he fucking could.

But what he couldn't forget, he could ignore. He shoved it aside, beginning again his litany of curses against idleness, against time on his hands that left him with nothing but the weight of time passing, passing, leaving him behind...

It was that first grey hair that had done it. Stupid, he knew, for his dad had been grey by the time he was thirty, and god only knew when his mum had gone grey, the tubes of Harmony had seen to keeping that particular little secret, great gallons of 'chestnut fire' keeping the world at bay and maintaining the colour of her youth. Stupid, stupid, stupid to let it bother him, with the genetics he'd been lumbered

with. Everyone knew that anyone with red in their hair went grey younger than usual. Look at Cowley.

Bad choice, that. Cowley was an old man, and not just on the outside. Every time he looked at Cowley, he could see Death just hovering on the wings, rubbing its boney hands in anticipatory glee. Only thing stopping the old skeleton was Cowley's own will. Doyle could just picture the conversation, running through it in his mind as he made his sixth cup of tea and watched his fourth cloudburst through the condensation of the window. "Who says my time is up? Away wi' ye, I'm a busy man. Betty'll give you an appointment, but I have to save the Empire and train my replacement first. You wouldn't happen to have any assistants of yours that might be suitable for working for CI5, would you?"

He ran out of interest in anything Cowley might possibly have to say, unless it were to give him something to do, something that would break the monotony. One finger wiped away the rivulet of condensation from the windowsill, using the beads of water to create a Caribbean paradise, where he could recapture the glory of the old buccaneers, and remember the thrill of the fifteen-year-old discovering that here was a whole society, almost completely devoid of women. And his fevered imagination had filled in all the discreet blanks left by the history books and his right hand had filled in all the details, in living colour. He'd always fancied himself as a buccaneer, sailing under the King's flag, but autonomous, free as much as any man could be, his cabin boy waiting for him. Or his Captain's boy, or First Mate, lying sprawled across his bunk in a spill of lace cuffs and hard cock, legs open, balls heavy and...

He pulled himself up short, a quickly furtive glance proving that he really was still alone in the room. Thank god for everyone else being off at lunch—not often he could be glad of being stuck with hanging around as back-up. There was a joke. Back-up. For what, that's what he wanted to know. The whole country seemed to be staying in and watching the telly, not a single terrorist or gun runner wanting to get their delicate little feet wet. He sat himself down on the couch, squirming around until there was only the one spring digging into his bum and settled back to watch the sheets of rain lashing from the blackness of the clouds. Hard to believe it wasn't even one in the afternoon yet, it being so dark outside. Black as the devil's armpit, his granda used to say. Don't go out

in that, it's the Devil's piss, seep into you and make your soul as black as the Pit. Old, old superstitions, delivered whilst he had sat upon bony knee, the grizzled grey of unshaven chin rubbing along his temple with every word the old man had spoken. Funny, he thought to himself, slurping the burning hot tea, he hadn't remembered Granda this clearly in years.

He leant back against the sofa, closing his eyes, the bright electric light turning the inside of his head red, backdrop for the memories. He'd loved his granda, loved him with the fierceness the very young reserve for their heroes. He could remember sitting there in his granda's old chair, the one with the leather back and wooden sides where the dockets held all sorts of wonderful treasures: the brown paper twist with its redolent tobacco, the magical machine that rolled Granda's ciggies for him when his arthritis had finally defeated him, the white crumpled bag that held boilings, the tattered old book of pirate tales that both of them could recite by heart, although they made a pretence of reading every word on every page. Was how he'd actually learned to read, now that he stopped to think about it, sitting there on his granda's knee, the fire turning his legs tartan where his short trousers left the whiteness of his scrawny inner-city kid's legs bare. He could still remember the drawings in the book, so many of them on separate sheets, paper saved from the sweetie bags, painstakingly covered by the fountain pen scratchings that had been so wonderful to a child. Blackbeard and Bluebeard, Cap'n Kidd and of course, standing bravest and proudest and richest of all, the magnificent Admiral Raymond Doyle. There was still laughter to go with that memory, storm clouds of melancholy pushed back by remembering the good things with his granda. Not so pleasant to remember the days when the old man had scared him, with his tales of devils and demons, of the evil in the world that was just waiting there, lying as blind as puddles, to suck in the unwary, to drown him if he let his guard down for even a second. And the days when his old granda had scared him without saying a word, when he'd sit there as grim and vengeful as the Old Testament, Moses bent and worn in front of the fire, never a word spoken, but judgement passed all the more bitterly for that. He shivered, remembering the heat of the fire burning through his jumper, waiting for Granda to speak, to tell him what was wrong, what he'd done, what was so dreadful in this world that it could make

his granda, his dragon-slaying granda, pillar of his life, sit there with silent tears marking their slow path down the furrows and wrinkles of his cheeks, to lose themselves in the sunken chin and hollow mouth.

Gramma would come through then, taking him into the kitchen, sitting him at the table, filling him with bread and jam and tales of what Mum and Dad would be doing, when they'd be coming home from work, what they'd be having for their tea, all the bright details that could never cover the silence that devoured the peace of the house.

He got to his feet again, made suddenly hungry by the remembered quintessence that was his grandmother's baking. Restless, trapped by this duty to hang around doing nothing until it was time to throw his life at a problem to solve it, he paced the tawdry room, kicking yesterday's Mirror out of the way, uneasy at the heritage he'd dredged up. He supposed he should be glad that he had inherited his father's moodiness instead of what he had slowly come to recognise as his grandfather's manic-depression. Should be glad, but whenever he thought of it, it would remind him too much of the unfocussed rage he could feel, and how easy it was for him to let the whole universe get out of perspective and how terribly, terribly easy it was to let the blues slide him down into the murk where even sunlight served only to highlight the decay of the world around him.

It's funny, how many of his old mates had thought he was being some kind of hero, joining CI5. None of it scared him—he reserved fear for the nights when he would lie awake, miserable over nothing, until he could find some cause to make him angry, some injustice that would paste fury over the depression, infiltrate it, bring heat back to him, bring him back to life. Anything, anything at all to cling to, to make life important and hot and vital. Anything, that could convince him that he would never go the way of his granda, head stuck in the gas oven, feet splayed twisted and grotesque, the foul puddle spreading under his trousers, hands like claws...

Weary hands ran through hair that had been tidy, disarraying it as much as his memories had disarrayed his mood. He hadn't experienced that memory in a long time, hadn't dared to. He sat back down again, allowing himself to feel, to not lock himself away in protective custody against all that went with that memory. There was a mild kind of surprise in him, the sort that wasn't really surprise at all, merely the conscious mind catching up with

what the subconscious had known for a long time. The anger and fermenting sense of betrayal were gone now, perhaps replaced by the years he had had of understanding his granda better, of knowing how hard it had been. He himself was all right, he only had the familial moodiness, and the fear of what might yet lurk in the future for him, but his granda had been ill, terribly ill in a class and generation which would not even acknowledge the possibility of the disease. Tragic, really, he thought to himself, wondering how much of a difference it would have made if his granda had had medicine. Wondering if his granda would have lived long enough to see him get his O Grades, make it into the Police. His granda always swore that his grandson would end up in the Police. Or arrested by them. Granda had always known...

Wasn't the only thing the old bastard had known, either. He could still remember that sunny morning, the daffodils brought in from that patch down where the allotments clustered, the smell of Gramma's cooking, the sounds of his little sister and younger brother playing snakes and ladders with Dad, Mum humming away while she did the mending. And sitting on the front step with Granda, the gravel voice so soft and quiet, explaining to him about how there were some things in some people that were wrong, terribly, horribly wrong, and all those poor damned people could do was sin as little as they could and pray for forgiveness when they fell by the wayside. Telling him about how these people had to hide that part of themselves from everyone but God, who knew all and forgave all, as long as the sinners repented, truly repented. Hold your head high, one wrong doesn't destroy all the good a man can do, not if he does something good to make up for it, the way the men of Sodom never did...

How he'd gone cold with fear months later, when he'd finally put his granda's warnings and the endless Bible readings together with the damning words of the dictionary, suddenly discovering that the goodness he wanted was the evil that was so heartily warned against. Discovered what Granda's veiled words meant, what they revealed to a scared teenager, lifting the rock of his own nature and finding that he himself was the enemy that he had been warned against. It had been an agony for him, coming to terms with himself, realising that there was no more room for him in his granda's church than there had been for Jesus at the Inn. Looking at the scales of his life, accepting that he was going to have to give up

one or other of the things that were held in seesawing balance there. His family, with their open hearts and faith, or his own self, with its secret desires, with the core of his being filled with something that his family could never understand or condone. The unarguable truth of what he was, of what he always wanted, needed, never knowing anything different. Girls were friends, people to talk to—about boys. Boys were for scrapping and fighting and fun and laughter. And long nights longing, remembering the way the special one smiled, or the way his muscles moved when he walked...

And sitting in the rest room of CI5 contemplating how he had realised he was gay and how he had to cover it up was not a good idea. Half the squad was convinced that Cowley was bloody psychic and even if he weren't, sitting here thinking like this was just more carelessness, right up there with almost getting caught by one of his own squad in a club he shouldn't have been in. Not when he was still so relatively new to the department. Less than a year, far too soon to risk his position, far too soon to risk his colleagues finding out. For they would, he was sure of that. There would be something, some slip that he would make, or simply that indefinable something that marked him apart. But not now, not so early on. He needed time, needed to weave himself into the very fabric of this squad, making himself so much an integral part that they'd all be willing to give him the benefit of the doubt or turn a blind eye.

But, he conceded, hard-headed practicality lending itself to survival, he'd been getting too fucking careless by half. Ten minutes earlier and what McCabe would have seen would have had CI5 minus one agent. Footsteps and catcalls echoed in equal measure down the hallway, coming closer, getting louder. He frowned, uncomfortable, unwilling to face insightful eyes and cleverly deductive brains. Too much still too close to the surface, too many small things hovering that could give him away to the perceptive, too many things that could get him hung. Better to bury himself in the paper, hide behind lurid banner headlines and scandal-mongering, masking his own quiet skeleton in his closet.

Not, he thought, that hiding was what was really needed right now. After being caught by McCabe in that club, it was time to pull a few birds, flaunt a bit of tit under their noses, rub it in about how all the birds fancied him. Maybe that new typist—what was her name? oh, yeh, Fiona, played piano, liked

dancing, father was a greengrocer—would be just the smoke-screen. Half the blokes were panting after her, the other half had to pick their tongues up from off the floor every time she wiggled by. Yeh, Fiona was just the ticket, put them all off the scent, give Cowley another spurious proof to back up his choice of agent, if he should ever be exposed and Cowley called onto the carpet for it. If he made sure that King knew he was going out with her, the entire squad would know in seconds. And then if he picked her up after work, wore his suit, and the fancy shirt, left it open as if he was ready for a bit of action...

As long as Fiona understood that it was only for a bit of fun, that there was no chance of happily ever after with a white picket fence. Couldn't live with his conscience if he didn't make that clear, it being bad enough that he had to use the girls like that anyway. Worst of all, of course, when he genuinely liked them. Felt as guilty as hell then, fucking them through the mattress with his eyes shut, pretending it was the handsome young man he'd seen walking along the High Street, smiling at him, swinging his hips in open invitation, making an offer it killed him to refuse. But he couldn't very well go after every handsome bloke who gave him the eye and ask for his phone number, not with bloody Bodie lumbering along beside him like the proverbial watchdog. Christ, but you had to be careful with ex-Service blokes. Could be anything from flaming queens to vicious bastards who loved nothing more than bashing a few queers on a Saturday night. Bodie looked the type to be rough trade as well, all muscle and brawn.

And beauty, his honesty reminded him. Yeh, well, he told himself, ostensibly so engrossed in a column on the future of farming that he didn't even hear his fellow agents come roiling into the room, we're not going to start thinking about Bodie like that. He is out of bounds, verboten, do not touch. The one unalterable rule: never make a pass at anyone you work with. Especially not when they'd be duty bound to turn you in as a security risk. Or beat you to a pulp for being a fairy. He hadn't been able to make his mind up about where Bodie stood yet, couldn't quite 'read' him, getting so many mixed signals he'd given up in disgust. Maybe later, once they really knew each other, once they'd been partnered for a while, then he'd be able to work out where Bodie's attitudes lay. Or where Bodie himself lay. God, but he'd give his right arm for Bodie to be bent. Be honest, he thought, you'd give your right arm if Bodie was willing to just

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lie back and think of England and let you have your wicked way with him.

Fuck, but he'd got it bad, hadn't he? Disastrous, abso-fucking-lutely disastrous. Rule number one for queers in Her Majesty's Service: never fall in love or lust with anyone you work with. Never.

So what had he done? Go on, admit it, his conscience sneered as he turned the page to read the story of football players found drunk and disorderly after the game. Took one look at the great lump and fell for him like a ton of fucking bricks. Bright, that. Really bright. Should apply to Cambridge, it was so bloody brilliant.

The suddenly loud laughter damming the room cascaded over him, water off a duck's back, so lost in thought was he. Pity, for it was the first time anyone had ever seen Murphy struck dumb and blushing. Must've been the initials he'd etched to go with the 'how-to' picture, not that Doyle either noticed or cared. His mind was on other things, fixed and focussed to the exclusion of all else, worrying over the problem like a weasel with a rabbit, drawing blood.

Well-trained copper that he was, he could even reconstruct the scene perfectly, remembering every single last detail of the very first time he'd seen Bodie, remembering every single last detail of the way his body had reacted, the way his mind had exploded with the seeing of this man. Should've known better—had known better, in fact, castigating and cursing himself the second after he'd laid eyes on Bodie, that infamous first second being spent on suddenly losing grip, his life whisked away from out of his hands, gone, disappeared, no longer his to rule, and all because he'd seen someone.

Stupid. So bloody stupid. He could've kicked himself for it, had taken it out on Bodie instead, lashing at him with the whip of his contempt for brainless 'yes, sir, no sir' army types. He'd been good at it as well, getting himself hauled over the coals by an irate and impatient Cowley for what had become the routine 'different but equal' lecture. How many times had he heard that, and all the other lectures in the early days? What a joke that had been as well, everyone convinced that he couldn't stand Bodie, hated the sight of him. Not one person had recognised what had been going on, unless it had been bloody Cowley, who had made such a to-do about 'over fraternization' between operatives. Maybe Cowley had known, but nothing direct had been said, of course, just things that might have been a warning, or things that might have been

tacit permission, or things that might have been subtle reminders. That was the thing about this half-life. In the olden days, it had been the mistresses and the actresses who had been the demi-monde, now it was the queers, keeping quiet, pretending that if no-one saw them, then no-one would know they were there and they'd be left in peace.

Fat chance. Not much peace in skulking about, looking at men he didn't dare touch, copping a quick feel under pretence of being squashed against someone in a crowded lift. Pretending that the way Bodie touched him got right up his nose sometimes. Got a reputation now for being a stand-offish bastard, thanks to all that. Too bloody scared of giving himself away to risk most of the usual horsing around that the other blokes could indulge in. Not him. Oh, no, not for him all the casual touching and wrestling. One inadvertent hand brushing against him in the wrong place at the wrong time, and there'd be screams of outraged virtue. "Mr. Cowley, Mr. Cowley! Mr. Cowley sir, Doyle and me was playing and he got a hard-on and I touched it! He's trying to have his wicked way with me, Mr. Cowley sir! Oh, what should I do?" Well, all right, so maybe they wouldn't be so schoolboyish about it, but they would suddenly pull away from him as if he had rabies or the plague. As if he had suddenly developed the disfigurement of leprosy, turning him into a monster in the blink of an eye.

And he wasn't sure that Bodie wouldn't be the worst of them. Yeh, yeh, so any queer bloke knew one of the best places to get what you wanted was round the barracks or an army pub, meet someone, go off to some quiet little dark place where no-one could see, hand over your money and he'd let you suck him off, or he'd fuck you. Always providing you didn't try to get him to touch you, and god forbid you should try to kiss him. Involuntarily, his fingers followed the well worn path of his broken cheek, remembering how he'd got that. Remembering, too, how he hadn't dared tell them in casualty what had happened and as for reporting it to the police, oh, that'd look good. Sorry I'm late for duty, Sergeant, but you see, I was getting fucked by some rough trade I'd picked up down the docks and when I forgot meself and tried to kiss him, he put the head in. Okay, so it had been one of the dockies that had done him over, but poor old Joe had been really done in by that Army bloke last year, ended up in hospital, with smirking policeman making smirking remarks, 'homosexual' become a sneering curse.

Christ, but he hated this. Hated having to hide, hated having to be afraid every time it got too much and he had to have a fella. The old song with its modern variation jingled its way through his mind: all I want for Christmas is my two-foot prick, my two-foot prick... He'd settle for anything over five inches, as long as it was attached to someone he could really stay with.

He remembered to turn the page then, engrossing himself in stock market prices, devouring the birth announcements, reading the death notices with avid interest. Anything to avoid thinking about Bodie in the same breath as settling down. Not a good idea, not a good idea, too easy to get maudlin wishing for what he couldn't have and didn't dare risk asking for. Even if Bodie were willing to have sex with him, it'd only be half a step up from rough trade. That would destroy him, that would. His self-esteem couldn't take that, not for any length of time, not the callousness of being rolled over, fucked and then left like so much meat on the butcher's hook. Didn't bother him over much when it was a stranger, for then it was nothing more than mutual convenience, each using the other for his pleasure. But to play that game with Bodie, well, suddenly it was abuse, for his feelings were raw and aching.

And if he didn't get a grip on himself, he was going to cause comment and comment led to suspicion, suspicion to observation and observation to exposure. Better get down the typing pool and start working on Fiona before—

"Oi, Doyle, where's your better half, then?"

Had to be fucking McCabe, didn't it? Shite, what was he getting at? Had he put two and two together after last week? Had he seen more than he had let on? Had that stupid little nancy boy McCabe had brought in for interrogation told them all about Doyle as well as everything else? Oh, fuck—

"What d'you mean, my better half? Only reason Cowley partnered me and Bodie was so that my brilliance wouldn't discourage you bunch of fat-arsed gits as much."

McCabe sniped back, expression normal, no sign of anything in his voice, just the usual banality of sarky comments. Thank Christ, Doyle thought, he didn't know anything, harmless comment, nothing more—

"No, 'm serious. How come that jammy bugger landed something to do while the rest of us poor sods are stuck in here like monkeys in a cage?"

"Speak for yourself, mate," he sniped back. "Of course, if you've just looked in a mirror, I s'pose you are speaking for yourself, aren't you? Dunno where Bodie is. Got in this morning five minutes late cos of the bloody road works on the bridge—" good excuse, that one, don't tell them about the hot solo session he'd indulged himself in most of the night and part of the morning, his arse still tingling and cock thrumming with remembered delight—"and Bodie was already gone. Cowley told me to mind my own business, so who am I to ask?"

"Where're you going, then?"

A quick glance at McCabe, checking that yes, every bored agent hanging around the dingy room was listening to the only new conversation they'd had all morning, and then he went into his camouflage spiel. "Moi? I am going where no man has gone before. I'm going down to the second floor to the gorgeous Fiona and ask her out. She's been panting after me all week, I think she's just ripe for the picking for a good night's fucking. So I'm going to go and give her a taste of my manly charms and—"

"If all you have to do is disrupt my office staff and waste departmental money, Doyle, then I'll leave Murphy here and take you with me to the meeting with Chief Constable Harrington. Perhaps your silver tongue will be of some use there."

Doyle groaned, but followed his boss, cat calls echoing from the rest room, comments about 'have a lovely time' and 'be gentle with him' coming after him. At least they were joking, not one of them suspecting. Oh, well, it might be boring as hell and his bum would probably end up numb, but at least it meant he didn't have to string poor Fiona along—he liked her too much to do that to her. With half an ear, he was more or less paying attention to the drone of instructions. He wondered, briefly, if it was exposure to all those bagpipes at an early age that made his boss drone on like that, or if it was just something that happened when a man got to be in charge. Oh, yeh, yeh, usual crap about behaving himself in front of the Chief Constable, tidy his hair up, tidy his clothes up 'as much as you can make yourself look presentable with less than three hours' notice.' Drone, drone, drone. Crime figures. Areas of operation. Small print. Division of power. Overlapping jurisdictions. Routine low-level security sweep while we're so quiet.

That brought him up short, skin going cold, palms sweaty, worse than facing a horde of maniacs with Uzis.

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Routine low-level security sweep. Holy Mary Mother of God. He hadn't said that for years, but then, he hadn't had this numbing fear for years either. Jesus Christ on a crutch, but he was for the off now. Routine low-level security—

"Doyle. Doyle! Don't just stand there lolligagging, man, I've got a meeting in ten minutes and I've no time for you playing at statues. Now, I'll need you to..."

The part of his brain that got him through briefings hungover to the point of death, the part of him that functioned on automatic pilot when he'd gone two days without sleep, that part of him followed Cowley, listening to him, analysing and answering on cue. But the rest of him was on the routine low-level security sweep. That meant someone—that meant Bodie, of all people, Christ it couldn't be worse than Bodie—walking into every CI5 safe house and every CI5 flat, with his little bug-detecting device, strolling through rooms, peering in cupboards, poking in drawers, having a quick look about for anything obvious.

And what could be more fucking obvious than some of the stuff he had at his flat? Fuck it, why did he have to be greedy and have another go this morning? Made himself late, made him run out of the flat in a hurry, the magazines stuffed into the bedside unit instead of carefully disposed of in someone else's bin. Those magazines were enough to toss him out on his ear, stigmatised, a great big bloody sign on his file 'raving poofter.' If he'd left well enough alone, if he'd only done himself last night, it'd be all right. But no, he had to be greedy, he had to have one more this morning, one for the road, one to set him up for the day.

One to ease the tension from him before he had to face Bodie again and keep his hands to himself again and not let on how he felt, yet again. Was getting to the point where he was going to have to pick up fellas who looked like Bodie and pretend it was his partner, if he was going to be able to get it out of his system enough to keep on working with him. But he hadn't wanted to take the risk, not after McCabe seeing him last time. That was rich. Hadn't dared take the risk, and look what had happened. Careless. Definitely careless and this time, he was going to get hung. How the hell was Bodie supposed to ignore the implications of those bloody magazines, eh? How the hell was Bodie supposed to ignore his little 'toys'? His footsteps hesitated a moment, almost stumbling, as a minor panic quaked through him. Had he even taken

the time to hide his toys, or had he left them, strewn across the bed, dropped by the side of the floor, lying on the bedside table? He knew he hadn't made the bed, left that lying open and sticky, streaks of cum drying on the navy blue sheets—no mistaking that, was there? So fucking obvious that some poor sod—me!—had spent the whole night wanking his little heart out and...

Fucking hell. Had he put that snapshot of Bodie away?

No.

He was dead. He was absolutely, unarguably, unavoidably dead. Might as well order his headstone now. At least it'd save him having to face the Presbyterian wrath of his boss. God, but Bodie was going to take him apart limb by limb. Slowly. Even if he'd had a chance of his partner tolerating him being queer, he had a better chance of marrying Cowley than having Bodie let him away with the obvious evidence of his flat. The obvious, pathetic evidence of his flat and that sad bed. It was no less clear than a ten-foot sign would have been. 'Here, Raymond Doyle, wanked to the image of his partner. Here, Raymond Doyle used dildoes to pretend that he was being fucked by his partner.' Here, Raymond Doyle had had to fight off tears of loneliness and misery because his partner didn't love him back...

Stupid, stupid, stupid. Maybe his granda had been right: maybe if you didn't deny yourself your vice, if you indulged yourself in 'sin,' then maybe your brain did rot. Only explanation he could think of for being so dense. God, he couldn't believe it! He was always so careful about the magazines, watching where he bought them, paying cash, getting rid of them as soon as he'd used them, making sure there was no incriminating evidence left lying around. Of course, he didn't throw his toys out every time, he wasn't made of money, but he'd used an old trick he'd learned from the upper-crust junkies. Hide it in plain sight, hide it in something that would disguise the shape, something that people might look at, might even pick up, but that would take careful examination to give you away.

Minute by minute, he reconstructed his morning, from the moment when he'd come, lying there flat on his back, still aching wonderfully from fucking himself, pretending that it had been Bodie. He'd been deceived by the cloud-laden darkness into thinking it was earlier than it was, had looked at the clock, sworn, bolted up, run into the toilet, washed himself

off, peed, brushed his teeth, shaved, run into the bedroom, hauled his clothes on, looked at the bed, realised he didn't have time to make it, pulled the quilt up a bit, not quite tidy, but covering the damage, grabbed his toys, stuffed them out of sight, thrown everything into the bedside unit on the bottom shelf, magazines stuffed in first...

His profound sigh of relief got him a few funny looks, but he couldn't care less. He was safe! Christ, he'd done it all automatically, a youth spent in a devout family paying off for once. Hiding all the evidence before Mum or Gramma could come in and find out, or before his little sister, the Toad-lette, could get enough evidence to blackmail him, it had become second nature. And the magazines were under enough stuff that the casual observer wouldn't notice them.

Would they?

Nah. Couldn't.

He hoped...

The meeting passed with him making all the right comments in all the right places, politely answering when asked, deferring to his superiors. Cowley was so worried about him that he got the rest of the day off, never mind the fact that he'd already done nine hours straight. He giggled at that thought, more than a little strung out by the strain of holding his own at the interminable meeting where he should have been little more than brawn to back up Cowley's brain whilst his own feverish brain lived and relived this morning and every possible combination of repercussions, ranging from nothing at all happening, apart from him having a heart attack from relief, to Bodie waiting for him, Bond with a loaded gun, ready to make bloody sure than Doyle did 'the decent thing.' He walked away from his boss without a word, peripherally aware of the Scotsman getting on the carphone, checking in on his department.

"Aye, well, you're right about that, Bodie. Definitely warrants further investigation. No, no, you're too close to him, I'll put one of the others on it..."

He was out of there like a bat out of hell, reminding himself, constantly, like a prayer, that there were dozens of things Bodie could have been referring to. It could be Matheson's hard-core collection that he bought from that dodgy bloke in Germany. Could be that interesting plant he'd noticed himself when he'd gone over to Murphy's that time they had to do the airport job together. Could be whatever it was that Lewis wouldn't let anyone into his flat about.

Didn't have to be his own secret, did it? Did it?

Half-way home, he couldn't face it, not right away. He drove around for a while, the minutes ticking by, one after the other, until there was a double handful wasted in arguing with red lights and one way streets. There was nothing for it: he'd have to face it, whether he postponed it an hour or a week, there'd be no getting away from it, if he were the one who had been found out. Everyone on the squad had some skeleton or other in the closet; you couldn't be average and do this kind of work. It was just a matter of whether or not the skeleton could be ignored as no security risk or failing that, if it could be used to CI5's advantage, like sweet old Doctor Jenkins' hobby. He shivered over that. Who knew, if Cowley was willing to turn a blind eye to that, then maybe he'd turn a blind eye to an agent who had fallen in love with his partner and liked to fuck himself when he couldn't find another fella...

Well, it had been a nice dream while it lasted. And boring though this job could sometimes be, he wouldn't give it up for the world. Would've given up sex, if he could, but he couldn't. Celibacy wasn't even in his dictionary. Neither, for that matter, was abstemiousness nor moderation. He had tried, a couple of times, to throw himself into being straight. Seemed the reasonable thing to do: he liked women, was able to function with them, and so what if that wasn't where his passion lay? Couldn't have fireworks every day of the week, could he? He could settle for pleasant sex with people he thought of as friends, and that would be enough. But, as the saying goes, the best laid plans of mice and men...

He'd lasted a whole, entire week, until he'd met that fella in the laundrette of all places. Then it had been blinding lust, glorious sex and the realisation that the only way he could go straight was if every man in the world had the old sex change operation. So discretion had become his watch word, careful as careful can be, although there was always someone who would catch the wrong nuance in the voice, there was always someone who would see you with the wrong person. There was always that lonely atom of his being that refused to skulk, that refused to hide, that refused to behave as if he felt a shame that wasn't there. And that one tiny little atom had got him in more trouble than his temper and his libido combined. It was that atom he blamed for subverting all his good intentions, for letting his lust out of its cage at the most inappropriate of times, for making him careless.

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Better by far to blame that than to admit that being queer was so large a part of him that he couldn't hide it, no matter how hard he tried. The street-light chose that very moment to glint off the thin copper bracelet he wore. Oh, shit, he hadn't even thought about how that must look. Didn't matter that tons of men wore them to stave off arthritis or because they were into holistic medicine. All that mattered was that he was a queer working in one of the security organisations and he was being stupid enough to wear a bracelet. He pulled it off, stuffing it into the glove compartment under Bodie's discarded Revels bag and the smithereened packet of roast chicken crisps. Oh, would that his own vices were so simple. Not to mention acceptable.

He pulled up as close to his flat as the press of cars permitted, taking great pains to lock the door, check the street, do all the things he could do to postpone the moment of truth another second or two. He walked slowly past the parking spots he had been careful not to notice, taking his time to go the length of the street, to cross the road, to turn the corner that would reveal his flat to him.

There was, unfortunately, a light on. Which meant... Cowley come over to talk to him. Bodie come over to talk to him. Bodie come over to kill him. Bodie come over to cash in on his secret. Bodie was an ex-Serviceman, he knew the score. With his looks, he could've doubled the feeble amount the Government paid the troops, getting stupid queers like himself to pay for the privilege of sucking Bodie off, paying him to get Bodie's rocks off for him. In the dark, all cats were grey, wasn't that what Bodie had said to him one night, in the car on obbo? Yeh, he could see Bodie, leaning up against a damp brick wall somewhere, eyes shut so he didn't have to see who was attached to the mouth that was sucking him, pocketing his money without a backwards glance. Didn't think Bodie would go in for beating the other bloke up, though, didn't seem Bodie's style. Either that or he just didn't want to even contemplate that particular possibility. Key poised to go into the lock, he remembered the snapshot.

Had he put it away?

Had he?

He went over the morning again, movement by movement. After he got ready, there was no post for him to pick up and it being Tuesday, no milk either. He didn't have the paper delivered, hadn't had time for breakfast, didn't have a cat to feed.

And couldn't remember what he'd done with the fucking photo. Had he stuffed it in with the mags, or shoved it in under his toys? Or the drawer, maybe he'd shoved it in there with the vaseline, or put it back in the book he kept beside his bed. Or left it lying out for all the world to see.

He couldn't remember. For the life of him, he couldn't remember. Christ, what was he walking in on? At least Cowley's car wasn't outside, that was always something. Wouldn't be a witness to his murder. The key grated in the lock, turned, then the next lock parted in its turn, the door opening slowly, without so much as a suitably melodramatic gothic creak. And it should have: he knew how some of those bloody heroines felt now, walking along dark corridors to find out what caused those dreadful screams to come from behind locked doors. There were no screams in his house, only the thunder of his heart and the hiss of impending doom.

What the hell was Bodie going to do? Anything from murder him to shove him up against the nearest wall and rape him into oblivion. Not that he'd do either without a major fight, but he knew to the finest percentage what his chances were against Bodie. The living room was dark, faintly stale from being shut up so much because of the wet weather. His coffee cup from last night was still on the table, and standing sentinel beside it was a tumbler he hadn't used.

Bodie.

And he'd been drinking. Silently, he crossed the carpet, navigating easily in the dark, picking the glass up and sniffing at it. Whisky, neat. The bottle was beside the empty glass, showing signs that Bodie had only had three drinks at most. At least the bastard wouldn't be dangerously drunk. Bodie wasn't a nice drunk, not even close. Vicious, obstreperous, downright nasty, filled with unfocussed rage that never failed to find a victim. Not someone you wanted to meet across the bed that was streaked with evidence of what you'd done with his photo propped where you could see it.

Oh, shit. He'd just remembered where the photo was. Leaning against the lamp, the way the real thing leaned against a wall, all straight and macho. He should just go to the nearest graveyard and lie down, drown in the rain and save himself a lot of agony.

He didn't even want to think about the expression on Bodie's face, let alone see it. Didn't want to experience it, any of it. Didn't want Bodie to despise him, didn't want Bodie to see him as some convenient

hole to be filled whenever the urge took him. Didn't want to, didn't want to, didn't, didn't, didn't...

And if he didn't do it now, it would only get him later. A deep breath, a quick slug from the bottle of whisky, the girding of his mental loins, and he was ready. We who are about to die, salute you, he thought, taking his jacket off, taking the change out of his pocket, making sure there was nothing on him that could end up causing him even more damage from a kick or a punch. Didn't bear thinking about, what a bunch of coins could do to a man who was kicked in groin area. Nasty, very nasty. Just like what he was about to face, he thought, turning towards the hall. His bedroom was down at the end, the light at the end of the tunnel, inappropriately enough. There was an outline of light beckoning him, moth to a flame, and he went to it, not willing, but resigned. He'd fight Bodie over this, argue with him, make him see reason.

And if Bodie wanted to fuck him, Doyle become nothing more than another pansy begging for it? What then? Where would love lead him then?

Onto his knees. No doubt, no question, no thought for the emotional repercussions that would hit him tomorrow. He'd take Bodie on any terms, just once, just to know what it was like, just to have had him in reality as well as imaginings. No way out. Nothing but the door, the handle to be turned. Bodie to be faced.

He threw the door open, words spilling from him, hard and clear and multi-faceted as cut diamond. "What the fuck do you think you're doing...here..."

There was one thing he hadn't thought of. One possibility that he hadn't dared even consider. One chance that had seemed too preposterous, too unlikely, far too extreme.

He had given not so much as a moment's thought to the possibility that Bodie might be just like him. Never considered that Bodie might come up with the idea of them having it off together, obviating the need to risk strangers, eliminating the necessity of taking chances. Bodie. Better than he at hiding this little secret. Better by far...

He feasted his eyes on this most unexpected of visions: his bed made with the good sheets he'd never actually used before, far too pretty a shade of blue for him to chance. And Bodie, kneeling in his bed, naked, gloriously, beautifully naked, the sheet draped strategically across him, hinting at the shape of things to come, muscles sheening, eyes shining, smiling...

And cuddling Doyle's white teddy bear. The place where he hid his toys in plain sight... People would look at it, a cutesy white teddy bear in a hard-bitten CI5 agent's flat, but then they'd see that it was still in its cellophane and assume it was a present for one of his multitude of nieces or nephews. Perfect hiding place, so obvious a thing that no-one ever looked twice at it. And with the stuffing gone, those arms and legs were the perfect size and shape to pack with dildoes, the body fat and round enough to fill with pleasure beads, ben-wa balls and all his other little foibles.

Bodie, eyes so bright, was staring straight at him, grinning. The sound of a zip being pulled down filled the room, and it wasn't someone's fly. It was Bodie, undoing the teddy's back, hand reaching in, withdrawing with a battered old photo.

"Careless, Raymond," he said, "very careless. You'd've been out on your ear if it had been anyone but me doing the security check. First thing I saw was this," and his hand caressed his own naked torso in the photo that had been taken that day down in Southampton. "Made sure that Philips stuck to the rest of the flat, kept this room for myself. Wanted a chance to look through your bedroom, see if I could find any trace of you." His lascivious grin went straight to Doyle's balls, filling them with the heaviness of lust. "Hit the jackpot, didn't I?" The blue eyes softened, the voice growing a little hoarse and more and more insecure. "Felt like I'd won the Pools and had Christmas all at once. I hit the jackpot, didn't I, Ray?"

The silly bastard had doubts? Maniac, absolute bloody maniac. Except, Doyle suddenly realised, I'm standing here like Cowley at a stag night and there's poor Bodie sitting naked in my bed, offering me...

Bodie. Sitting naked in my bed. On offer. And I'm just standing here? Christ, more than one bloody idiot in this room then. Easy enough fixed. He was giddy with the relief from the incipient fears that had been digging at him for hours, infused with the elation of Bodie, sitting naked in his bed, waiting... He heeled his shoes off, pulling off socks and tossing them off to the side somewhere, slowly peeling his t-shirt off, fingers trembling as he unzipped his fly. He groaned at the unbound lust that was burning in Bodie's eyes, the other man's attention fastened voraciously on where Doyle's fingers were covering his groin, hiding him from view the way the sheet hid Bodie.

"I had visions of Cowley waiting for me with the Spanish Inquisition. Thought the best I could hope for was you beating me to a pulp. Or trying to rape me."

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Bodie nodded at the blatant bulge of desire that filled Doyle's jeans. "Not much chance of that, is there, mate? Christ, Doyle, why'd you never take me up on any of me offers?"

"Offers? What offers? When did you ever let on you were queer?"

"What about that night I offered to do you in the car?"

"What night? Bodie, what are you going on about?"

"We were talking about sex and how you weren't getting your end away. And I said, all cats are grey at night. I mean, anyone who's interested would've let me—"

"That's what you call an offer? Christ, Confucious' got nothing on you, mate. Why couldn't you just come out and say something?"

"Why didn't you? I made it bloody obvious I was interested, but you—"

"You call copping a feel and making queer jokes showing you were interested?" Doyle muttered, pulling his jeans off, jumping into bed beside Bodie, staring at him in utter disbelief. "Shan't be expectin' roses on our anniversary from you then, shall I?"

"You've got a flaming cheek, moaning at me. At least I didn't go around like Errol Flynn—"

"He's queer an' all, 'd you know that? See, I was being obvious, you were just too thick to notice." He stopped speaking, looking instead at the perfection of Bodie's mouth, deciding that the morning would be soon enough to sort out the whys and the wherefores, that now was the time to take Bodie up on his offer. He might not be sure of all the details yet, but there had been no recoiling in horror at the mention of an anniversary, so it didn't seem likely that it would be a one night stand or just a quick fling. And if Bodie was willing to set things up like this, waiting for him the way he had, seemed likely that Bodie was after more than just unfeeling sex. Could've shoved him up against the wall the minute he'd stepped through the door if that's all Bodie fancied. And going by the way Bodie had been clutching that teddy bear, then it didn't seem likely that he was a prude. That was something that would bear investigating, in detail and at great length. But later, when he'd had a chance to kiss the mouth that was smiling at him...

He leaned forward, expecting a semi-chaste kiss of introduction, and found an open mouth, starving, devouring, sucking his tongue in, kissing him hard, tongue pressing into his, moans coming from Bodie's

throat to fill Doyle's mouth. Arms came round to hold him tight, strong muscles clutching him, inviting him to unleash his own strength, to let his muscles strain to hold Bodie tight, to pull him in closer, to mould them together. He was being eaten alive and loving it, hands roving over smooth skin, kneading muscle, grabbing great handfuls of firm arse, fingers digging in, seeking, seeking, finding the tiny hole that he would fuck one day.

But not now, oh, no, not now. He'd wanted this too long, fucked himself with plastic too often pretending it was Bodie. He was going to have him, he was going to take Bodie inside him, own him, make Bodie belong to him. He was going to feel what it was to have Bodie be a part of him. Reluctantly, he pulled away from Bodie, breaking the cycle of consuming kisses, sucking his way down the pale torso, biting on flat pink nipples until they were tiny mountains of sensation, licking at sweet skin, tasting the faint salt of sweat. And all the while, Bodie's hands were on him, touching him, marking him, making his body come alive.

Frantic, Doyle shoved the sheet out of the way. He was desperate to see Bodie, to make up for all the times he hadn't dared, lest he give himself away by lusting after him instead of just sizing him up like any straight bloke would another. He traced a finger the length of the thick vein that filled Bodie's cock with the heat and hardness of blood, following it all the way to the exposed head. "Never told me you were Jewish," he muttered, licking his lips.

"I'm about as Jewish as you are Catholic, sunshine, haven't gone in years. And will you stop rabbiting on about fucking religion and get on with it? Come on, Ray, come on, mate, suck me, go on, let me feel your mouth..."

There were things he could say, jokes he could make, but all he wanted to do was fill his mouth with Bodie, to taste him, to get drunk on the man. Mouth open wide, he swooped down, plunging Bodie into his throat, taking him all the way in, filling himself to overflowing. God, but this was wonderful! He could feel Bodie's pulse against his tongue, he was overwhelmed by the musk of the man, inundated by the pleasure of sucking Bodie while Bodie's hands did such wonderful things to him. He wriggled around, giving Bodie the hint, muttering around the cock in his mouth when he felt Bodie's mouth descend upon him. Didn't want that, would come in half a second if Bodie did that, and he wasn't a spotty teenager to be satisfied with a quick 69.

"Don't!" he shouted, letting go of Bodie, pulling his weeping cock away from Bodie's generous mouth. He manoeuvred himself around until he was breath to breath with Bodie, interspersing his words with the tiny kisses that were all he dared. "Want you to fuck me, Bodie. Want you up me, fucking me as hard as you can. Want to feel you come inside me..." One handed, not bothering to look, he grappled the vaseline from the drawer, vaguely glad that he obviously hadn't remembered to put the top back on. He twined his fingers in Bodie's, kissing him deeply whilst he brought their hands to the tub of lubricant, bringing Bodie's hand down to his arse, letting go only when Bodie shoved him aside, anxious to get inside him. One finger pushed into him, his muscle relaxing with the easeful knowledge of long practice. Another finger, and Bodie was taking great heaving breaths, obviously trying to slow down, to calm down. Doyle twisted round, sitting aside him, mouth coming down to nip and bite at tender balls, the slight edge of pain enough to pull Bodie back from the brink. He could feel Bodie's hands on him again, then a thumb was in him, and its mate, and he could imagine how he would look to Bodie, all pink and spread and waiting for his cock.

It was almost too much for him, and Bodie seemed to agree. He was manhandled, tipped over, legs spread by strong hands, cheeks opened wide, while Bodie towered over him, face and chest flushed, lust filling his eyes. There was love there, too, enough to make Doyle willing to believe they had a chance, that this could work, that they could settle together.

And then coherent thought fled him, replaced by the feeling of the blunt crown of Bodie's cock pressing into him. Circumcised felt no different from any of the other blokes he'd had, but it was all the better because it was Bodie, the hot bulk of him, the wet hardness sliding into him, pumping into him, thrusting, hitting him just so, just there, oh yeah, oh yeah, just there, just like that, only harder, do it harder, oh yeah, that was it, ohohoh...

He could hear himself keening his pleasure, the sound adding in to the pleasure, building up with the feeling of Bodie in him, of Bodie over him, all around him, of Bodie whispering and groaning his name. He arched his back, trying frantically to get Bodie in him deeper, to feel him inside him all the way, filling all the empty lonely places... His legs were aching, spread so wide by Bodie plunging into him, and his arms were straining with the need to hold

Bodie even closer. He was moving with Bodie, part of him, joined to him, belonging to him. Bodie was his, he thought fiercely, clutching him tight with the muscles of his arse, holding him still inside, bringing him down until they were kissing, joined mouth to mouth, cock to arse, breathing for each other, body pulsing with each other, all of it perfectly together.

Then neither of them could stay still, Bodie fucking him so hard, rocking them, pleasure screaming through him as he watched Bodie's face transform in orgasm, as he felt Bodie's cock spasm deep inside him, spilling Bodie's seed, filling him up with Bodie's life. It was too much for him and he came, arse contracting around Bodie's cock, arms contracting around Bodie's shoulders.

Coherency flooded through him, a pæan for the joy of having Bodie, of it being all right, of Bodie not hating him.

Not hating him? If he'd heard right, hate was the farthest thing from Bodie's mind. There was a heavy weight on him, Bodie literally shagged out on top of him, gone limp and sated and asleep, letting Doyle support him, protect him. Idle hands stroked along sweat-damped skin, tangled in wavy hair, dipped into the cleft of backside that would be his soon. It would, he would see to that. Wanted to have Bodie kneeling under him, undulating, screaming with the pleasure of being fucked. He was willing to bet there hadn't been many allowed to do that, but he would. He'd be able to stake his claim, to mark Bodie deep inside where only the two of them would know. And what better set up could they ever hope for? Working together in a job that often forced them to spend the night at each other's flat out of sheer exhaustion or because of the practicalities of the job. Going on working trips together, double room to save taxpayer's money. A job that no-one expected any woman to put up with, freeing them from anything but casual birds to camouflage their truth. High stress that the experts all agreed gave rise to extreme behaviour, to horsing around, to excessive closeness.

Oh, yeah, they had it made.

He lifted his head a little to look at Bodie, but all he could see was the top of his head and the sheen of strong shoulders. His. Bodie was his. It erupted through him and he tightened his arms, hugging Bodie close, getting a faint moan of protest for his efforts. He let go, marginally, not ceding his grip on Bodie, stroking him again. He wiggled a little, grinning at the residual ache in his arse and the wet

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softness that was Bodie's cock kissing his own. His. His, his, his, his. Never going to let him go, never going to leave him...

Abruptly, he thought of Granda, who had promised he'd never leave, promised he'd never let him down... the morning he'd topped himself. Gramma had been out at the shops when he'd done it, and Ray had dogged school because it was too boring for words and Granda had a new book to read. Granda had left him then. Left him right after making all the biggest promises of all.

But then, he thought with a sigh, shoving Bodie off to the side a bit so that he could at least breathe again,

arranging sleep-laden limbs across him so that Bodie was still all around him, I'm not me granda, am I? I'm just a moody bastard who's hit the jackpot. Yawning, he turned more closely into Bodie's embrace, cuddling into the heat. The light was getting on his nerves and he eyed it balefully, trying to decide if it was bothering him enough to be worth the effort of moving. The teddy was sitting drunkenly under it, the lampshade gone askew, the light shining on some of the things that had spilled from the inside of his hiding place.

Christ, but he was looking forward to sharing his teddy with Bodie...

Note: This story was originally released to the Pros circuit on March 23, 1991. This is the original introduction:

NANNY'S TEDDY TALES AND OTHER BEDTIME STORIES

Yes indeed, M. Fae fans, it's time for another teddy tale. This one is number three in the series. It was inspired by a wonderful piece of art by Marilyn Cole, entitled Peek-a-Bodie. The picture shows a luscious naked Bodie sitting invitingly on a large bed, teddy bear clasped to chest. On first viewing there is a strategically draped sheet. But lift the clear plastic overlay on which the sheet is rendered, and lo—Bodie is revealed in all his glory!

—Caroline K. Carbis
Editor, Oblique Publications