

# Roses Are Red

M. FAE GLASGOW

## prologue

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ONCE UPON a time, long, long ago, and far, far away, in a land that smelled, ever so faintly, of lavender and roses, there were two handsome princes. Well, they weren't quite princes, nor were they precisely queens, but rather, somewhere in the middle.



Our Lads, as we shall call them, were a handsome pair. One was fair of face, dark of hair—actually, to save a time, just think of the description of Snow White, turn that a bit butch, and there's Bodie for you. Doyle, on the other hand, isn't quite as easy to describe. Some people claim he would give the Ugly Stepsisters a run for their money; others claim he's so delicate and dainty he should wear nothing but glass slippers while he weeps into Bodie's great, manly chest as Bodie carries him away from it all. Some people, though, claim that Doyle is all hellfire and wildcat, a panther stalking the jungle of London's streets, snarling at everything in sight. Then, of course, there's what George Cowley thinks of him, but we're far too refined to repeat the likes of that.

Our Lads live lives of great excitement, constant danger and derring-do; every day, they perform acts of enormous courage and peril dogs their every step. They nick criminals, they uncover the undercover terrorist, they provoke the agent provocateur, they flush out the sewer rats who prey on the weak: you name it and they do it. They have saved the nation from the wiles of particularly corrupt politicians, they have fought their own battles in the Cold War, they have even saved the great city of London from a nuclear bomb. Theirs are full lives, of massive importance, intrigue and complexity, as they fight for truth, justice and the—what shall we call it? Not the American way, for despite the lack of stiff upper lips and the preponderance of guns, Our Lads are true Brits. Not entirely the British way either, not with all those guns, the car chases, squealing tyres and Bodie's execrable accent. Well then, we'll call it truth, justice and the mid-Atlantic way. They're real heroes, Our Lads, willing to risk their lives for the abstract tenets of justice and honour.

But to reveal that side of them would require a plot, which is, of course, anathema to any self-respecting slash story. Therefore, instead of joining Our Lads as they trudge, tenacious and noble, in search of those who would harm the fine fabric of our society, we shall skip all of that boring stuff, and join them, slash situation in progress...





# 1

## *roses*

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**“YOU WANT WHAT?”** Bodie nearly squeaked, voice risen an octave and eyes watering, either from the shampoo that had just dripped all over his face or from the force with which the back of his head had met the tap.

Or from sheer shock over what Doyle had just said.

Wincing, he stuck his head back into the sink and poured enough water over his hair to get rid of the last of that vicious shampoo as he tried to fit what he thought Doyle had meant with what Doyle had really been doing. “Oh, nice one, Cyril,” Bodie said, more relieved than sarcastic, as he disappeared under the ugly brown floral print of his towel, “you actually had me going for a minute there. Should’ve known you were only pulling my leg.”

Ah, if only Bodie had realised this was a slash story: then it wouldn’t have taken him all of thirty seconds to realise that his partner hadn’t conveniently responded with guffaws, giggles and a slap on the back. In fact, this being a slash story, his partner had responded with a brooding silence, a meaningful look and an artfully sexy pose, propped up against the nearest wall. The harsh light of the wash room flooded over him, but that didn’t much matter: Ray Doyle being Ray Doyle and fanfic being fanfic, he still looked mysteriously deep—and sensitive, too.

Bodie, not being quite as stupid as some of us would claim, had realised by now that all was Not As It Should Be. He stopped rubbing his hair dry, and emerged from that floral cocoon, hair sticking out all over the place and his eyes just about popping out of his head. “Oh, I get it,” he said, sounding hopeful and wary at the same time, “you’re practising on me because if you can pull it off with me, then poor Stuart doesn’t stand a chance.”

Doyle didn’t say a word, just stood there, and smouldered, sexily. On the outside, at any rate. On the inside, he just stood there, gobsmacked at Bodie’s reaction and smouldered, nervously.

Bodie swallowed and though he would later deny it to his dying breath, he lowered that towel like a nervous virgin overcome by a bout of maidenly modesty. “You are just pulling my leg, aren’t you, Ray?” Bodie asked, edging towards the door to the changing room, being very, very careful to keep his back firmly to the wall, just in case Doyle had more designs on his person than Laura Ashley. A blast of cold air caught him and, in the best tradition of the worst romance novels, he clutched his towel closer to his heaving bosom, lest his suddenly pert little nipples should give Doyle entirely the wrong idea.

Doyle didn’t need anything to give him the wrong idea: he was doing that quite well on his own. Still staring at Bodie, at where the horrible brown towel covered the gorgeous pale chest, Doyle licked his lips. After all, what else could a display of modesty be from Bodie other than the

self-same technique of endearing shyness Doyle had seen Bodie exercise on a horde of women? Rather sexy, really, to be on the receiving end of Bodie's seduction skills.

Bodie groaned, and not in passion. "Tell me you're just having a practice so you can pull it off with Stuart."

"I'm not planning on pulling it off anyone," Doyle said, finally, as he followed the rapidly retreating Bodie, thinking that Bodie was taking the coy routine a bit far. "What're you so scared of anyway? It's not as if it's something you've never done before."

Bodie turned then, and I'm really sorry, but despite all his usual efforts at suaveness, sophistication and physical allure, there's no other way to describe this: Bodie gawked. Open-mouthed. Like a moron.

"Not something I've never— Hang on a minute here," he said, "but didn't you just—right here, in the middle of CI5 HQ, with George Cowley not a hundred yards away, didn't you just ask me to let you shove your cock up my arse?"

Now that was offensive. Doyle had been much more subtle and refined than that. "I never said that."

Bodie looked as if he couldn't decide whether he was relieved that he'd been mistaken or worried about what he'd taken to hallucinating.

"What I actually said was 'd'you fancy a shag?'"

"Oh, well, pardon me, sorry I didn't get your elegant speech verbatim. But *here?*" Bodie demanded, voice rising ever higher. "Now?"

"Course not, you pillock. Tonight, my house. 'Bout nine-ish."

"And shall I bring red or white wine for that? Or just a jar of vaseline?"

Doyle looked at him for that. No need for that tone of voice, really. All right, so he hadn't exactly come out with hearts and flowers, but what the hell else did Bodie expect: Ray Doyle down on bended knee reciting poetry? "You're the one who knows what we'll need, so you bring that and I'll supply the plonk."

"Plonk? Oh, yes, lovely, a nice bottle of cheap plonk to go with the cheap shag. Wouldn't want to fork out for champagne, not for Bodie, oh, no—"

Doyle was getting more than a bit peeved by all this. Anyone'd think Bodie didn't understand what was going on here. "Bloody hell, Bodie. Anyone would think you'd never done it with a bloke—I'm the one who should be coming over all nervous, not you. What the fuck's the matter with you? It's not as if you've never done it before."

Bodie didn't answer that until he'd hauled on the biggest, thickest, sweater he had, thanking all the powers that be that this was the depth of winter and he had a lovely supply of polo necks laid in. He wasn't even thinking about what he was going to say next: he wasn't going to think about anything until he was ready, fully clothed, armoured in more fabric than the average nun, though that was about all he and the virginally righteous had in common. As Bodie didn't realise he was currently starring in a slash story, he wasn't in black. You know the favoured look: black polo neck, black trousers, black leather jacket, an air of menace, mystery and deviant sexuality. Oh, no, he was dressed for a real winter: white vest under a brown polo neck, with those brown polyester trousers that don't even show off the dimple in his flank, that rust-coloured overshirt, the cream and brown holster, and over all that, the ugliest olive-green, fur-lined parka on the face of the earth. Ugly enough, almost, to drown out the hideousness of the wellies. The green wellies, the ones that made his feet look like Gulliver's on the body of a Lilliputian.

Doyle didn't seem to mind the ensemble. In fact, the only thing Doyle seemed to mind was the fact that there was still some distance between them. He advanced, unhurriedly, still devouring Bodie with his stare, and Bodie, our big, brave, butch Bodie, was perilously close to squeaking like a fairy and running like a scared mouse. Or should that be the other way round?

"What d'you mean it's not something I've never done before?" Bodie asked, belatedly remembering that Doyle had cast aspersion on what little character he had left.

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“Come on, Bodie,” Doyle said. “Look at the facts. Ran away from home to join the merchants when you were 14, ended up with mercenaries in Africa, back here to join the Paras and then the SAS—women weren’t exactly thick on the ground, were they, and everyone knows what men do when there aren’t enough women around.”

“Wank a lot, you mean,” Bodie replied, the blessed relief of the doorway just an arm’s length away.

Unfortunately, Doyle was also just an arm’s length away, and Bodie was grabbed, and held, and pinned up against the wall. “Wanking,” Doyle said, sounding like seduction, temptation and heaven on earth rolled into one, “isn’t what I had in mind. Although we can start with that. What’re you shy about, eh, Bodie? This?” he asked, his right hand reaching down beneath the barrier of that damned parka to find Bodie’s well-covered cock, “or d’you mean *this*?” And that’s when Doyle showed the advantages of ambidexterity: his left hand nimbly found Bodie’s bum, and the seam of his trousers as it lay between the cheeks of his arse. “What’re you nervous about? After all, it’s not as if it’s anything—”

“—I haven’t tried before. But—”

Bodie wasn’t saved by the bell, but by the cacophony of Cowley trundling down the corridor, furious instructions in full spate. “Doyle, you’ve five minutes to get upstairs to liaise with that fool Willis and you, Bodie, get your skates on, you’re with Murphy in the birdwatchers’ hide on the edge of the marsh—”


“Mr. Cowley,” Bodie interrupted with rare reverence, “I could kiss you!”

And with that, he was gone, grinning, leaving behind that rarest of creatures, a seriously dumbfounded George Cowley.

“What the blue blazes has got into that lunatic now?”

“Nothing, sir,” Doyle replied, departing in his partner’s coat-tails, an expression that experienced slash fans would recognise as lust and libidinous intent all over his face. “Not a single thing—yet.”

The rest of the night and much of the morning was spent doing the sorts of things a story with a plot would require, and it was well into the afternoon by the time they’d finished. Bodie’s wellies had been discarded, the parka had been liberally dribbled with mud and assorted bird droppings, Murphy had been released from hospital with a bandaging and a stern warning, and Bodie’s reaction to Doyle had been about as calm and rational as Sleeping Beauty’s dad to poisoned spindles.

Needless to say, despite Doyle’s best—or worst—intentions, they didn’t have sex. That night. 





## 2

## *are red*

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**A WEEK** had passed, with all the comfort of a princess lying on a mattress stuffed with peas.

Just to make life truly joyous, Cowley had noticed the obvious, that something was wrong, and relegated the two of them to the sort of job that would either cure them or kill them—metaphorically speaking, of course, Cowley never one to actually waste a tea-bag let alone a resource as expensive as two trained agents.

So, thanks to nothing more extreme than a bit of tension and a couple of comments, they were stuck like rusty needles in Records and when they weren't there, they were trapped together like sardines in the tin-can of a Capri waiting for Terry Green to un-disappear himself and be stupid enough to return home.

Today, they'd already suffered Records and now they were in the car, another forty-five minutes left of their sentence, and the house they were watching had about as much life to it as the Three Bears' cottage. Except at least the Three Bears' cottage had had porridge steaming and you knew if you waited long enough, Goldilocks would show up for a bit of B&E before her B&B.

They didn't even have each other to torment, each too busy treading carefully, neither one having either enough guts or enough masochism to mention what had become the taboo topic.

Bodie sighed. Boring, this. Not that he'd say boring to Doyle, in case Doyle started thinking about the other kind of boring. Could always ask Doyle about his new gun—but then again, maybe not. Not after Dr. Ross' illuminating lecture yesterday about the phallic symbolism of guns and repressed homosexual urges expressed thereby.

Football—yeh, Liverpool had played last night, scored—

Scored. Scratch topic number two.

Keep this up, and they'd be reduced to politics and religion.

Bodie sighed, again, and started tearing the foil off yet another mini Swiss roll.

"You'll get fat," Doyle said.

So much for good intentions: the words were out of his mouth before he could catch them. "Bet you wouldn't want to fuck me then," he heard himself say, and winced, and stuffed the Swiss roll in whole so there wouldn't be any room left for his other foot.

Doyle gave him a sidelong glance. "Oh, I don't know. Be more of you to sink my teeth into, wouldn't there?"

And sitting there, in their familiar car, with HQ and Cowley just a radio signal away, Bodie could almost feel Ray Doyle's teeth on him, teasing—

"I need a leak," he lied baldly, fumbling with the door handle, banging his knee on the steering wheel in his rush to get out.



## Roses Are Red

He loped round to the back of the house, to where the woods started—and that was when he saw it, something so bloody obvious that whoever had missed it in the first place would be shot. A long, low mound of earth, the heavy soil melting from the hard clumps of the last frost, the sharp cuts of spade marks still visible here and there.

And Bodie wasn't the least bit ashamed of his first thought when he found that shallow grave: thank Christ; they'd be so busy dealing with this mess that Bodie was off the hook.

For now.

He made his way back to the car whistling "John Brown's Body."

Doyle was so busy castigating him for his choice of tune and then trying to track down Green's killer, they didn't have sex that night, either. 



# 3

## *violets*

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**A FORTNIGHT** later, and of course, neither one of them had said a thing to the other, bar the usual work-comments and more barbs than Robin Hood and all his Merry Men could hold in their collective quivers. Saturday, early evening, after the last of Grandstand, the two of them were sitting on Bodie's sofa, knackered, watching as Doctor Who managed to avoid tripping over his scarf.

"Remember the Cybermen?" Doyle asked, lazily, can of lager propped on his chest.

"All that foam. Daleks were worse, though."

"Glad all we have to face are terrorists, murderers and mad bombers, really?"

"Yeh."

"Funny what people are scared of, though, isn't it?" Doyle said, carefully noncommittal.

Bodie grabbed another packet of roast chicken crisps and made obscenely short work of them.

Doyle watched him, a thoughtful expression on his face, which is a bit of a disappointment because by this point in a slash story, he really should have been glazed by lust and all over Bodie like a rash. But Doyle, contrary to the end, was not co-operating and instead of either turning

his emerald green eyes to gaze limpidly into Bodie's sapphire eyes, or at the very least showing his tongue down Bodie's throat, Doyle did the unthinkable. He brought up his own heterosexual past. "Did I ever tell you about Gwen?"

Bodie shoved another handful of crisps into his mouth, beef and onion this time, devoured as quickly as the last lot.

"Wonderful girl, Gwen. Best girlfriend I ever had."

Round the crisps keeping his mouth safely occupied, Bodie made a questioning noise.

"I didn't dump her, believe me. Nah, I joined the police, she stayed on at art school. Lovely, lovely girl, Gwen," Doyle said, voice soft and low and nostalgic. "We used to go to all the concerts in the Halls and all the student rallies—every last one of the parties as well."

"It's a miracle you ever got a stroke of work in," Bodie said before taking refuge behind another handful of crisps.

"We got a few strokes in," Doyle said easily. "Did a bit of work too. God, Gwen in bed!"

Bodie wasn't going to chance commenting on that. He decided Doctor Who was worthy of his full and total attention.

Doyle, unfortunately, wasn't taking the hint.

"God, yes, Gwen in bed. What she could do with her hands—and her mouth."

Bodie grabbed his can of lager in one hand and was horrified to find only empty crisp packets to grab in the other.

Doyle hadn't let up. "Funny thing is, I nearly didn't go out with her. You see," he said, gently taking the empty crisp bag away from Bodie, "she was what could be called generous of figure. Round. She always said she was fat, and d'you know something?" he asked, putting a Crunchie in Bodie's empty hand, "I never minded her being overweight."

Bodie looked at the chocolate, looked at Doyle. Carefully put the chocolate on the table. "I'll spoil my girlish figure if I eat that," he said, and watched, as Doyle's expression clouded.

A pause, while the colour images on the screen flickered and changed. "Amazing, isn't it?" Doyle said, making a point of gesturing towards the T.V. set and the shenanigans thereon, weird creatures and weird people running around all over the place. "D'you think he ever appreciates the people with him?"

"Never," Bodie said. "Just tosses 'em into the Tardis, takes 'em off into the unknown, and expects them to just grin and say ta very much. He's so busy being a Time Lord, it probably hasn't even crossed his mind that some people want a bit more than being whistled after like a dog and expected to come running."

"Yeh, but he's not stupid. If they'd bother to tell him, he'd be able to fix it, wouldn't he?" Doyle darted a glance at Bodie.

"You mean sitting down having a meaningful chat like women discussing their female trouble?"

That earned a chuckle, almost as filthy as Doyle's usual thoughts. "Over cups of tea and fairy cakes."

"Fairy cakes?" Bodie said, frostily.

Doyle's internal invective would have made a navy green with envy. "Nothing wrong with fairy cakes. 'Course, I think it's more Eccles cakes, Eiffel cakes, Empire biscuits—"

Bodie turned then, and looked at his partner full on for the first time in what felt like days. His sharp gaze took in Doyle's rolled up sleeves, undone shirt buttons, the expanse of skin, the low-slung jeans that clung so tightly and revealed far better than they hid. The old, familiar smile returned, Bodie's voice warming with affection. "Nothing wrong with tarts either."

The Cheshire Cat had nothing on Doyle—especially since our Doyle had no intention of disappearing, not now. He stretched, to let Bodie appreciate what a lucky sod Bodie was about to be. "Nor jammy dodgers."

But neither one of them had the balls to mention crumpet.

## Roses Are Red

Elsewhere, on the television, the good Doctor was still managing not to trip over his scarf, though how his lovely assistant could be that stupid and still walk and talk at the same time was beyond anyone's comprehension. Doyle dunted Bodie, nodded towards the screen. "Can you imagine being lumbered with someone like that?"

Bodie took a long, long drink from his can, then paused, just for a moment, and finally, decision made, he said: "Can't imagine what it'd be like to have someone you can't trust guarding your back." Then, quite deliberately, he reached out and picked up Doyle's offering of chocolate.

And despite Doyle's suddenly high hopes and expectations, and because of Bodie's downright peculiar scruples, they didn't have sex that night, either. *~*



4

*are blue*

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**DOYLE** had a few days' worth of relative peace and quiet, nothing out of the norm on the job, just the usual weekly batch of terrorists, killers, junkies and MI5 betrayals. Quite quiet, really, with plenty of time left over for the important things in life—such as driving home all by himself while working out what the hell was wrong with Bodie.

Poor Doyle. If only he'd bothered to ask *us*, he'd know what was wrong with Bodie. After all, a man who thinks himself in love with a man he thinks is straight isn't going to chance revealing what he *really* feels to the straight man he loves but whom he thinks is only curious to try a walk on the wild side with a familiar guide to it all.

But Doyle didn't ask *us*, and poor *petal*, he was stuck going round and round in circles, trying to decipher Bodie's emotional code language. We'll join him, fret in progress...

Christ, Doyle thought to himself, barely making the light and neatly cutting off a little yellow mini in the process, all I did was ask if he wanted a shag. It wasn't as if he'd proposed anything major, just a shag—

The words hit him like a bolt from the blue, although it might well have been a bolt from the God of Mechanics in retribution for the horrible way he'd just ground the clutch, grated the gears and stalled out in the middle of traffic.



Oh, you smooth-tongued devil, he mocked himself, getting the car moving again. ‘Fancy a shag’! Oh, yeh, guaranteed pick-up line, that.

All right, all right, he told his conscience, so this wasn’t even close to being just another pick-up. But what else was he supposed to say to a bloke—his best friend and partner, at that.

Well, Bodie had obviously expected him to say something else. All right, all right, to be fair, Bodie probably hadn’t expected him to say anything at all.

“Daft bugger,” he said softly, thinking about Bodie: silly fool was probably quite convinced Doyle had no idea that Bodie was in love with him.

As if Doyle could miss a thing like that. Truth to tell, it was realising that, and thinking about it, that made Doyle even consider the whole sex thing in the first place. Well, that, and a physique Adonis would have to work for.

Such contemplations aren’t exactly conducive to good driving, so given Doyle’s usual level of skill in that area, it’s just as well traffic had come to a grinding halt for a minute.

Right, so if Bodie wasn’t bowled over by the invitation for a shag, and given that he’d be hanged if he went through an entire slash story without inveigling Bodie into his bed, where the hell had he gone wrong and what the hell did Bodie want?

Doyle gnawed at the problem, going through ideas like an indebted mother going through names, until finally he hit on his very own Rumpelstiltskin. Or Moët et Chandon, in this case. It was one of those less than pleasant moments when a person looks back at what they said, what someone else said—and then has to look again at what they said in the first place. Fancy a shag, indeed! Oh, great choice, he told himself again, make Bodie feel really wanted.

Bloody miracle Bodie hadn’t thumped him really.

Especially when Doyle stopped and thought about *where* he’d delivered his ever-so charming offer. The wash room, pleasantly situated between the sweat-laden changing rooms and the adorable perfumes of the toilets. Oh, and let’s not forget, not a hundred yards away from George Cowley’s office.

Yeh, well, it was Bodie’s fault for stripping to the waist and then bending over like that to wash his hair in the sink. Doyle closed his eyes for a moment in silent reverence.

The driver in the car behind was beeping furiously, the car behind her joining in, and Doyle came back to his surroundings all of a sudden, taking off with a scream of tyres just as the once-green, now amber, light turned to red again.

At least, what with actually thinking about it, and what Bodie had said on Saturday last, Doyle finally knew what it was that Bodie wanted. And if there was one thing Doyle was an expert on, it was producing evidence, like a rabbit out of a hat, if need be. All he had to do was convince Bodie that his intentions were fairly evenly matched between the honourable and the dishonourable, and they’d be home free. So, he’d already convinced Bodie of the dishonourable, time to work on the honourable part of the equation. And he knew just the ticket.

But naturally, you guessed it: they didn’t have sex that night, either. *~*





5

*sugar*

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**AND SO** it was the next day, a freezing cold February morning, ice on the windscreen, locks frozen solid, that Bodie noticed it: there, on the floor, sticking out from under the passenger seat, the sharp corner of a shiny black box.

A lesser man might panic in fear, thoughts of bombs dancing through his head, but our Bodie could recognise a box of Black Magic chocolates from fifty paces. And Bodie being something less than a complete moron, it didn't take long to work out who was behind it, of course. First, list the people who would recognise his car, get into it without damaging it or leaving a trace. A very small list. Next, list the people who would do this for whatever reason. A smaller list, that. Then list the people who would spend this much money—but no, that wouldn't help, he decided, because that would exclude Ray Doyle. And who but Ray would get him chocolates and add a card that read, 'Roses are Red, Violets are Blue, You've got a big bum, But I still love you.'

Then sign it 'Gwen' in Doyle's inimitable handwriting.

Tough, very tough, working out who was behind it.

Bodie ripped the cellophane off the box, and sat there eating chocolates for breakfast, and thinking.

"Morning," he said to Doyle later, as he sat cosily on the sofa and Doyle came chattering in, blue of fingers, face and language.

His partner didn't answer him, just ploughed through the gathered agents like a Nimrod through an ice field, everyone parting like waves to avoid his toxicity.

"Morning," Bodie said again a few minutes later as Doyle sank down on the sofa next to him, slowly thawing fingers wrapped round a mug of scalding tea, blue language replaced by the inevitable slurping.

Bodie just stared at him. "Christ, a sound only a mother could love."

Doyle gave him a long, assessing look for that. "Morning, Mum."

Bodie swallowed, wondered suddenly if he had chocolate round his mouth and if he did, would Doyle wipe it away.

Belatedly he realised Doyle was still looking at him. Probably, Bodie conceded, because Bodie was still staring at Ray Doyle like a landed fish staring at the proud fisherman.

Very much out of character—but this is a slash story, so he's allowed—Doyle took pity on Bodie. "Cowley got us up for anything today?"

"Not so far. Only thing going on is Sally's sting on that poor bastard who thinks she's a Russian spy who wants to buy his plans to the Yanks' missile base."

Bodie cringed in sympathy: someone was going to wish he'd never been born, if Sally had her way. "Quiet, apart from that?"

"As a grave."

"Which means..."

The dreaded cemetery of dead files, where they would be forced to spend hours cross-referencing names and places, and then helping the computer lab people put all the old information into the new computers.

Bodie looked at Doyle. Doyle looked at Bodie. They both looked at the godforsaken weather outside.

"Didn't you say your best pigeon had called in?" Doyle asked, all innocence.

"Why, funny you should mention that," Bodie replied in his best *Upstairs, Downstairs* parody, "but the chappie did just that. I do believe we should dash off and find out what useful tidbits he has for us today."

Doyle waited until Bodie was on his feet, half-way out the rest-room door, and had the great pleasure of, for once, not being the bum on the receiving end of the quick grope.

He was still grinning as he nipped in front of the stunned Bodie and got to the lift quickly enough to see the expression on Bodie's face as the doors slid shut.

And he was leaning, casually seductive, as Bodie finally reached the car. Bodie, knowing his partner only too well, took one look at that debauched Botticelli cherub expression and knew—just *knew*—that Doyle had been up to something that Bodie would regret.

Despite the cold, and despite Doyle's choice comments, Bodie checked the car carefully before he'd chance getting into it. A good look round the interior and he had to admit it: nothing he could see. Finally, suspicions barely abated, Bodie unlocked the passenger door and let the icicle-bedecked Doyle in.

"Thanks, mate, but you didn't have to hurry that much."

"Oh, it was nothing," Bodie said, making it as much a question as anything else.

All Doyle did was smile, and that was enough to make the bravest man nervous.

By the end of it, Bodie was exhausted: an entire day of opening doors with expectations of carefully-balanced buckets of water, of sandwiches suspected of vile bugs hidden inside, of fearing salt dressed up as sugar, of any one of a million of the pranks they'd played on each other. And what had he got? Nothing. Not a bloody thing. Typical Doyle: do nothing but smile, and for no effort at all, he'd had Bodie running around like a cat on a hot tin roof.

Bastard, he thought, more than a little disgusted with himself that he was so far gone that even a day of absolutely no dirty tricks couldn't make him hate his partner.

"Oh, Christ on a crutch," he said out loud, sinking into an armchair in his flat. Where did that leave him? Ready to fall at Doyle's feet, give Doyle everything Doyle wanted, and for what? For Doyle to leave as soon as he'd worked through his curiosity.

That whimpering sound in the back of his mind was his conscience replaying Doyle's 'morn-ing, mum,' comment back at him. And Doyle's hand on his bum, and Doyle's note with the chocolates.

Chocolates. He'd get a few of those chocs under his belt, while the last of the shepherd's pie heated up and he still had some beer in.

He was still blinking from the brightness of the fluorescent light in the kitchen—he was going to have to shoot the damned thing, one of these days—when he saw them.

Flowers. Dozens of flowers. A small fortune in flowers. And all of them red. And all of them roses. Bodie, understandably, gaped. That much money—spent by *Doyle*? Ray Doyle, who never forgot the name of a person who had borrowed a cheap biro from him, who had been known to walk rather than fork over his share of a taxi? Buying roses—in February?

Bodie had to sit down after that.

For Doyle to do flowers like that—it had to mean something.

## Roses Are Red

Of course, the last time—every time—Doyle bought flowers, it was to get some bird into his bed, or to apologise to some bird so he could get her back into his bed again.

Food, beer, even chocolate forgotten, Bodie sat and stared at those flowers and thought, for a very long time.

And well, with Doyle determinedly *not* sitting by the phone—it just so happened he *wanted* to stop at home tonight and read his book right here beside the phone table—and Bodie sitting pondering in his own kitchen two miles away, it goes without saying that they didn't have sex that night, either. *~*



# 6

*is sweet*

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**LOVELY** and warm, so cosy, so snug, so comfy, he was quite, quite content to stay where he was. Bodie sighed deeply, cooed in a bit more deeply under the duvet and decided, happily, to drift off to sleep.

Then it occurred to him to wonder, just a bit, what had woken him up at this time of the morning in the first place. He dug around in the back of his mind like all seven dwarfs mining for diamonds and came up with a lump of coal.

His letter box.

The letter box? The postman, at this hour? But it was still dark and—

And it was the second week in February, which meant it could be dark all bloody day—

Dreading it, Bodie snaked one naked, defenceless arm out into the cold and snagged the alarm clock. One look at that glowing face, and he was hurling his entire defenceless body out into the bitter cold, hauling on the first clothes he could grab and hurtling out the front door, Hansel without Gretel, the fear of the witch on his heels. Cowley, the Wicked Witch of the North, kept waiting by Bodie, and no doubt, there'd be a quite a curse or two waiting for *him*.

“You all right?” Doyle asked him as soon as Cowley had stopped filleting Bodie into tiny little pieces.

Such concern was enough to make Bodie look askance at Doyle: after all, it had only been a relatively minor mauling by Cowley's standards. If Doyle thought all this...this...stuff he was doing was going to set the pair of them off fussing over each other like...like... A cafuffle along the corridor, Lucas and McCabe limping into view.

"And I'm telling you, you need to be at the doctor's with that—you should be in the hospital, but you won't do that, will you, so you'd better get your backside to the doctor and have him patch you up—"

"And I'm telling you I'm perfectly all right, it's only a bit of blood—"

"And after—oh, h'lo Bodie, Doyle—an' after the doc's patched you up, I'll take you back to my place. We'll pick up a curry—"

The next corner cut the rest of it off mid-fuss, and Bodie finished his own thought off: he and Doyle fussing over each other like a pair of CI5 agents. "I'm fine," he said to his partner.

"You're sure?" Doyle was giving him a funny look, God knew why.

"Yeh, I'm fine. Nothing to get worked up about. Right, where d'you think we'll find this creep Cowley's after?"

Doyle gave up in disgust at that point. He kept up his end of the usual work conversation, even did his share of their usual backchat, and all the time, he was wondering what the hell Bodie wanted, what the hell it was going to take to convince Bodie—what the hell it was going to take to get a *reaction* out of the bastard. Christ, at this rate, it *was* going to take going down on one knee and reciting poetry. Oh, yes, he could picture the scene: himself down on bended knee, ringbox open in one hand and Bodie saying, "Nice ring, that. Speaking of rings, there's boxing on the telly tonight. Shift over, I can't see through all that hair. Who d'you think's going to win?"

Sad part was, at this rate, neither of them was going to win.

That day, they caught Cowley's criminal with almost embarrassing ease, so pleasing the old man that they were actually given a few hours off.

Dispiritedly, Doyle slouched off to his own car, to his own flat, to try to come up with something—anything—that would make Bodie realise that he was interested in more than just a quick shag—

Yes, it just might take that. Worth a try, definitely worth a try.

Doyle was whistling as he picked up his keys and headed out the door with a nice, new idea all bright and shiny like a penny in his pocket.

Bodie, meanwhile, was trudging up the stairs to his flat, and he absolutely was not, not the least little bit, nope, not at all concerned about Doyle. It was the cold that had made Doyle look so miserable, yes, that was it.

Not that Bodie was worried.

Not that Bodie was even thinking about Doyle.

By the time he'd got to the top of the steps, he'd had to admit he wasn't even kidding himself.

What the hell was wrong with Doyle? Anyone'd think someone had just kicked him in the balls, or tossed a present back at him—

Oh. Sort of as if someone—not that Bodie had anyone specific in mind, naturally—had ignored a box of chocolates. And a bouquet of red roses.

Worse. That was as close to an apology as he was ever likely to get from Doyle, apart from a carefully off-the-cuff 'sorry'.

And maybe that 'sorry' this afternoon hadn't been about Doyle being a bit on the distracted side.

Great. Fantastic. Keep up this keen observation and sharp thinking and Cowley would be promoting him to traffic warden.

He turned his key in the lock, pushed the door open. No, not open. Stupid thing had jammed. Oh, great, just what he really wanted. A pile of bills big enough to block the door. He knew he'd spent too much over Christmas and New Year.

## Roses Are Red

This being the perfect excuse to vent some fragment of frustration, Bodie kicked the door, a satisfyingly violent thump, heard something tear, and then the door was swinging free. Odd, that, he thought, picking up the things from behind the door and heading for the kitchen. Only two letters and a pile of torn photographs—no, not photographs, colour prints, really good motorbike shots. Who the hell would be stuffing a calendar through his door in February? Yes, as if it took him more than two seconds to work out *that* particular mystery. Chocolates, that he understood. Flowers, too—but a calendar? Today's date had a tick on it, and tomorrow was circled—

But not even for what just might—only might, he warned himself, don't start getting stupid here—what just *might* be something a bit more important than a quick shag could keep him from food, especially as last night's dinner was a long time ago and not even Bodie could keep going on a single greasy pie from an even greasier pub.

He opened the fridge, and for perhaps the fourth time in his entire life, his mind completely forgot that his stomach thought his throat had been cut. Bodie stared. And stared. Right there, on the shelf, in his fridge. A magnum of Moët et Chandon.

So that's what he'd missed this morning because he'd overslept. And he'd be willing to bet a week's pay that this was what'd been wrong with Doyle all day. Just look at it, sitting in his fridge, nice as ninepence and a hell of a lot pricier. This had to be from Doyle. Had to be. Who else could get into his flat without setting off alarms or waking Bodie up? Who else had had their nose seriously out of joint all day? For that matter, who else had been sending him expensive presents?

A magnum of champagne.

And the words he'd said not all that long ago. Doyle had actually forked out for champagne, for him, Bodie.

My God, Bodie thought, dazed, the bastard must actually—

He wasn't so dazed he was going to think the L-word. Well, perhaps think around it, sort of play with it—

Bodie sat down with a thump, almost missing the chair. The L-word. He tried it out in his mind. Love.

He, and Ray Doyle, and Love.

Maybe.

Maybe? his conscience scoffed. Champagne, flowers and chocolates? That much money, from Ray Doyle? He should just give in now and go pick out the rings.

Or at the very least, he realised, coming out of his stupor, he should go over to Doyle's flat and open the champagne. And see where they went from there.

He made it to Doyle's flat in record time, ringing on the doorbell, hammering at the door. Waiting. Ringing on the doorbell, hammering at the door. Ringing on the doorbell, hammering at the door. Ringing on the sodding doorbell, kicking the stupid bloody door.

He felt like a complete fool, sitting on Doyle's steps with a magnum of champagne at his side. A bridegroom without a wedding to go to.

Finally, after what had to be a good twenty minutes—an eternity, in other words, for Bodie—familiar footsteps were heard approaching. And just as we think this is going to turn into a proper slash story, the *deus ex machina* strikes again. Along with those footsteps came the sudden bleat of Bodie's RT harmonising with approaching bleat of Doyle's, so their first sight of each other was their shocked expressions as they realised just why they'd had so little bother bringing in Cowley's criminal today.

They'd nabbed the wrong man.

And if they didn't get the right man, Cowley was going to get *them*.

Do you really need me to tell you that they didn't have sex that night, either? 





7  
*and so*

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**THAT DAY** was over and done with, and the next one too, and the one after that was all but finished, with scarcely enough time in all that for them to snatch forty winks—but finally, the mess was tidied up as nice and neat as a spinster’s parlour. Bodie was heading off wearily—trying very hard not to imitate Sleeping Beauty, in fact—to chauffeur Cowley back to the abandoned Rover, and Doyle’s hand was stopping him, thrusting something at him. “Here,” Doyle said, running a grimy hand across his face and through his hair, stale blood—not Doyle’s own, thank God—smearing across the bone-whiteness of his skin. “Was going to give it to you tonight. Don’t look at this in front of Cowley, all right?”

“Yeh, no problem. Listen, Ray, about this afternoon—”

Cowley was being a nuisance, getting in the way of perfectly good moments when Our Lads could reasonably be expected to stop fat-arsing about, admit they love each other and fall into bed. But would Cowley get out of the way to permit that? Oh, no, not him. He was shouting over his shoulder: “Bodie! Some of us would like to get home and get to our beds!”

Yes, and some of us would like to get home and get into someone else’s bed, Bodie thought.

“Coming, sir,” he said out loud, ‘in a minute,’ he added silently as Cowley disappeared into the relative warmth of the car. He turned back to Doyle. “Listen—”

Hands crammed into the pockets of his jacket, Doyle wouldn’t look at Bodie. He nodded over at their boss, cramped in the Capri, files already open on his lap, but those sharp blue eyes weren’t reading about nefarious activities: they were watching Bodie and Doyle, closely enough that Doyle had to resist the urge to check if there was a neon sign flashing ‘guilty’ over his head.

Bodie, either oblivious to their boss or too tired and too cold to be in the same league of paranoia as Doyle, actually reached out and touched Doyle, briefly, on the arm. “Ray—”

“Cowley’s foaming at the mouth,” Doyle said quickly, none too sure of what Bodie was going to say, but only too sure that he just wasn’t up to facing Bodie’s saying no, or Bodie’s pretending he’d no idea who’d sent the champagne and the flowers and the chocolates. Especially not with Cowley watching them like his gran watching *Coronation Street*. “You’d better get your skates on.”

A few minutes later in the car, carefully negotiating empty streets and patches of black ice, Bodie kept his thoughts low and quiet and discreet, just in case Cowley really could read minds.

“And how is Doyle?” Mr. Cowley asked.



## Roses Are Red

If you'd asked him afterwards, Bodie couldn't, for the life of him, have told you what he said. All he could think of, was how Doyle would be, in bed, and afterwards. Thankfully, none of that blurted out, for Cowley didn't have conniptions, didn't do anything other than pick up his own car and tell Bodie that he and Doyle had the day off.

It didn't really dawn on Bodie until he'd pulled up outside his flat. The day off. Wonderful. Even if the day was due to start in all of thirty-five minutes. Yawning, Bodie nearly broke his neck trying to stretch in the car, but tired though he was, he wasn't really in any hurry to go out into the cold again. Because that would mean going upstairs, and that would mean going home, and *that* would mean phoning Doyle to tell him they had the day off.

And that would mean trying to work out whatever the hell was wrong with Doyle.

And, Bodie admitted, he was far too tired to make sense, let alone think things through. Doyle wasn't behaving like a man who'd gone off someone. Mind you, Doyle wasn't behaving overmuch like Doyle either, but if Doyle loved him the way he'd said he did—

He told himself it was only because he was so tired his head was reeling. Had absolutely nothing to do with thinking the L-word that many times. He should go in, go to bed—alone—get a good night's sleep, think about it all in the morning.


Only...there was that letter Doyle had given him.

He'd sleep really soundly, oh, definitely, knowing that letter was sitting there in his jacket pocket.

Better read it. See what Doyle had to say. Might even be a 'Dear John' letter, that would be rich, given the kiss-off before he'd even had a kiss. As he tore the envelope open, he refused, point blank, to even entertain the notion that it was anything other than the bitter cold making his hands tremble.

It wasn't a letter: it was a pair of tickets. To Paris. Paid for by Doyle.

It had to be love. Real love. Once in a lifetime love, for Ray to spend that much money on something that...that... There was no way round it: romantic. Ray Doyle was being romantic. Over him.

Bodie stuck the key in the ignition: he had somewhere to go, and there was a certain late-night shop open on the way... 







8

*are you*

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**DOYLE** was not amused. Some bastard was leaning on his doorbell. Some bastard who'd waited just long enough for Doyle to get the bed warmed up. Some bastard who was going to stand there, ringing that bloody doorbell, until Doyle got up.

He was going to kill that bastard Bodie.

"This had better be fucking good," he said, as the door opened and Bodie was revealed stuffing what looked like an empty Boots the Chemist's bag into his pocket.

Bodie smiled, and not even a winter's morning stood a chance against the warmth of that smile. "It's going to be fucking fantastic."

With a flourish worthy of the Koh-i-noor Diamond, Bodie proffered his own gift, his own contribution to this expensive wooing. The giant, economy-sized tub of Vaseline, complete with red bow on the top.

Doyle, understandably, gaped. Then he gave one of his inimitable filthy chuckles and said, "For me?"

"For both of us," Bodie said, closing the door behind him and opening his arms to Ray Doyle.

Who spoiled the whole thing by shivering, then yawning, which set Bodie off. They shared their first kiss, and nigh near holding hands, they headed for the bedroom, Doyle diving back into the warmth, Bodie realising—belatedly—that given what they'd spent the last age doing, he was probably a bit ripe. "I'll just nick in for a..."

"No need, I'm not one of your birds who's going to be put off by a bit of honest sweat."

"I'll only be half a tick."

He was more than half a tick, and the few uninterrupted minutes in a warm cosy bed after far too long of non-stop work had had an unfortunate effect.

And Bodie knew just how far gone he was when he stood there, naked in the cold, gazing down on the sleeping Doyle. Careful not to waken his partner, Bodie crawled in beside Ray, sliding in close to him, gathering him into his arms, grinning as Doyle muttered invectives, half-woke and wrapped himself around Bodie.

It was an odd feeling, this sense of security, and safety, and belonging. But, Bodie thought as he succumbed to sleep, he just might get to like it.

So despite this being a slash story, they didn't have sex that night, either, unfortunately. But the next morning, bright-eyed and bushy-tailed and well on the way to making up for



## *Roses Are Red*

lost time, they proved that Bodie's gift to Doyle really had been for both of them. And they lived happily ever after. *✿*



*The End*

**NOTE:** If aging memory serves, *Roses Are Red* was originally written in January of 1996 to be read aloud at the bedtime story reading of that year's Escapade slash convention. During the initial reading, the audience quickly learned to join in at the end of most chapters and chant in unison, "they didn't have sex that night, either." Afterwards, the tale was released to the Pros Circuit as a Valentine's Day story. *✿*