All the Perfumes of Arabia

by Fiorenza_a

Summary

Innocence was dead and the guilty were alive.

References themes which may be disturbing - if you have any concerns about this, please read the end notes before proceeding.

End Notes

Notes

See the end of the work for notes

Bodie stood by the murky lapping waters and lost himself in the damp mist covering the filthy river and wreathing the dirty streets beyond. Everything indistinct and grey.

Innocence was dead and the guilty were alive. Days like these outraged the heavens and tore at his soul. But neither the blue invisible above the sunken clouds, nor the blue invisible beneath the sweep of his lashes would make manifest their pain.

He heard the unmistakeable athletic lope of Doyle's trainers on the derelict, weed strewn gravel behind him.

"Bodie?" gentle as only Doyle knew how to be.

He raised his eyes at the sound of that siren voice. Doyle was beautiful, from the misty softness of eyes which never knew what colour they were, to the soft ruffle of curls caressing his face. So beautiful that looking at him was painful. Ugly pain he'd distanced himself from and this painful vision of beauty he couldn't escape. It hurt to live and it hurt to die. Endless grey all around, the
world in a shroud.

"Oh hell mate, who has words for this? Let's just get you away from here, eh?"

Bodie rubbed automatically at the weightless place on his sleeve and felt Doyle capture his hand.

"C'mon eh mate? You've got a few people worried here. Come back to the car. Let me take you home."

Yes he wanted to go home, but all he had was a flat. Doyle would take him to a flat and abandon him there. He wanted to be held, to find peace in the volatility of those arms. And Doyle might. Today.

"Please Bodie, c'mon mate. We look a right pair of pillocks holding hands like this, so do me reputation a favour and come away, eh? Should never have let you out of my sight, should I? God knows you've done more than your fair share, but it's over now, nothing more you can do, 'cept scare me stupid. Can you feel me shaking? 's not because I've forgotten me coat sunshine, so come away, yeah?"

Go away with Doyle? Yes he wanted to do that, but there were too many people between him and the car, he'd have to walk past them all and they'd see. He shifted his gaze, instinctively calculating the route, the odds of making it to the vehicle.

Doyle was talking into static "4.5, I've got him, now give us some bloody space, I need to get him out of here."

He felt hollow inside. Numb. Lightheaded. Maybe he should sit down. Somewhere cool where his thoughts didn't hurt so much. No, too many people, he needed to retreat. Solitude. With Doyle. He needed to be cold. Too much heat, too many people.

"Bodie?"

Doyle's voice. Doyle wanted him for something. Wrong. Wrong. Doyle, impossibly, painfully, beautiful Doyle, didn't want him. He wanted Doyle, that was right. Mustn't get confused now.

More static "No sir, he's not alright...I'll try sir, not sure how much he's hearing...Yeah, I think it would help if we could cut the distance to the car...No sir, I want to take him home...No sir, he's not a danger, least not to the general public...Of course I'm bloody sure...yes sir, sorry sir, I understand that sir, but with all due respect, they're not the ones holding his bleedin' hand...yes sir...of course not sir...yes sir...mine sir, don't think his...yes sir, thank you sir."

Bodie slipped his free hand under his jacket and awkwardly unholstered his weapon, turning it to offer the grip to Doyle.

"What's this then, eh mate? You surrendering to me? Or did you hear what Cowley said?"

Doyle would want the gun, standard procedure if he was in custody. Maybe now he could just sit and absorb the chill. Become stone. Perhaps if they left him here long enough...

"Bodie? Mate? I need you to try and understand. They're gonna move the car closer and then it'll just be you and me, alright? Gonna take you home and get you into a nice hot bath, get some of this bloody kak off you, feed you up a bit, okay sunshine?"

Yes, he should be hungry. Hunger was life, hunger was pain, hunger was...had become...irrelevant...but clean? Yes he needed to be clean. Oh God, how he needed to be...
He closed his eyes, tipping forward, burying his face in Doyle's neck, trying to stifle the sob about to rip free and tear him in two.

"Oh please, Bodie mate, don't do that, please don't do that. I need you to be strong for a little while longer, just a little while longer, please Bodie, I promise, I promise, just please..."

He couldn't, not for himself, there wasn't any strength left for himself, but this might be the last thing Doyle ever asked of him and for Doyle he could give what he didn't have. He pulled himself upright and turned to where the car was, closer now, path clear, just him and Doyle and the miasma of a decaying world. His feet were so heavy, every step an effort, an effort he was making for Doyle.

"Yeah, that's the way mate, just need to take you for a little drive."

Yes, let Doyle drive, Doyle still wanted to move. He just wanted to be still, cold and quiet and still. Besides, it was Doyle's car, his was... somewhere.

"That's the way mate, just sit in here for me."

Blessed relief, he didn't have to hold on any more, he could let go, let the seat hold him, the seat and Doyle, hand it all over to Doyle and let go. Finally let go...

"Bodie? Bodie? Come on mate, wake up for me, need to get you out of the car. That's it Dopey, watch yourself, hold on to me, just a few steps and we'll have you inside. Just as well I'm not still in that place on the third floor, eh? This is a lot easier. Always wanted to lead you up the garden path, looks like this is my big opportunity, eh sunshine? C'mon you can manage this, can't you? 'Course you can, great strapping lad like you. That's the way. In here. Careful. Watch yourself, that's the way, just follow me. No, not there sunshine, gonna get you straight to bed."

Irony. He could still see irony, if that wasn't a bloody joke, what was?

"What's so funny sunshine? That's a smile isn't it? In there somewhere, where d'you find that then?"

*No, not a smile, not a smile, nothing like, something else. Can't breathe, can't breathe at all...* 

"Hey, hey mate, 's alright, I'm not going anywhere, you just let it out, whatever you need, just let it out, been strong enough, you just hang on to me, okay sunshine? Only we're gonna have to get you out of this coat sometime, can you let me do it now? Just get it off you? No, Bodie, no, don't, settle down mate, that's it, settle down for me, that's the way. Bit too soon for that, was it sunbeam? Don't worry, no harm done, we'll just wait a little bit longer for that, shall we? Why don't we try lying down instead? No, it's alright Bodie, I'm not going to let go, I just think we should lie down. That's the way, that's right, you got it mate, just lie down here with me, that's it, just down here with me, that's the way, good lad."

Safe. Safe now, Doyle holding on, all around, warm, warm now. Let it go, let it all go now...

"Yes sir, almost twenty-four hours...no, not yet...yeah I managed to get everything off him, cleaned him up a bit...no, not that I can see, bit bumped and bruised...yeah, I just bet they do...I know that sir...yes sir, I've seen it, but we just got him out of a 'secure environment', don't any of 'em bloody think?...yes sir, I do sir...yes sir...and...thank you sir."

Doyle talking. So tired. So very tired. Can't sleep with Doyle talking.
"Hello mate, we awake now, are we? Feeling any better? Should be, been out since yesterday. Did you catch any of that? You're gonna be staying with me for a bit, okay sunshine?"

The weightless place on his arm was burning into him again and he rubbed at it, still feeling the rough woollen foulness of his sleeve despite knowing the coat was gone. Doyle must have taken it while he slept, must have taken it all. Oh God, Doyle must have seen...It had to be over now. Doyle would tell him sadly, angrily, with a fist, it couldn't be anything but over, all he had to do was wait and Doyle would end it for him.

"Stop that Bodie, please stop that, you can't keep rubbing at it, you're gonna take the skin off. You can still feel her, can't you mate? That's what all this is about, isn't it? Don't need a bloody shrink to tell us that, do we sunshine? Only you need to stop doing that now. Think you can try? Make an effort, just for me?"

Another effort? For Doyle? He wanted to, he really wanted to, but there was nothing left, not even for Doyle.

"Bodie? You in there sunshine? Can you hear me?"

Was he still here? Maybe he was. It didn't feel like he was anywhere. Floating maybe. Drowning.

"Okay Bodie mate. I'm going to run that bath I promised you, get the rest of that muck off you and then I'm going to change the sheets, okay? Will that help?"

Would clean sheets help? His mind wouldn't concentrate on that. It just wanted to hold her and keep her warm. She was too fragile and he couldn't give her the strength she needed. Couldn't even keep her as warm as she needed. Too cold for too long. And then too still for too long.

"Tell you what, shall we have some tea, nice cup of cha, you'd like that wouldn't you? Yeah, 'course you would, never turn down tea, do you mate? Only I'm going to be busy running the water, so why don't you make the tea?"

That's right, keep idle hands busy. Saps moral idleness, discipline goes to pot. Make some tea, he could do that, couldn't he? Yes, just give it a minute. In a minute the gun cotton in his mind would clear and he could make the tea. In a minute he'd be able to push some sense of urgency into his limbs and he'd be able to move them. In a minute, when they weren't so heavy, when he wasn't so tired...

"Bodie?" quietly, stroking his hair, how long stroking his hair?

How long holding that fragile weight? How long wishing his useless masculine body could sustain life, instead of merely creating it? How long pleading for a miracle from a long abandoned God? How long...

"Hey now, that's my game. I do the crying round here, you're supposed to be the strong silent type, remember? Only Bodie, not now mate, now I need you to tell me how you're feeling."

Nothing, that's what he was feeling. Nothing and pain. Vast aching emptiness. Let him sleep, please let him sleep. Being awake was too raw. Why was there no morphine for the soul? He'd been strong, couldn't he be something else? Surely he could be something else? He must have done his bit by now. Couldn't he just be weak? His turn. Her turn. Your turn. Turn, turn. The colour of her hair...Another joke.
"Please Bodie, talk to me."

Doyle needed him, he couldn't be strong, not anymore, not anymore, but Doyle needed him "I can't Ray. I can't."

"Doesn't have to be about that sunshine, do you think you can get into the bath now? If I help? No Bodie, don't nod, tell me."

"Yes."

"That's it, that's my bright lad, no drifting off, you just stay here with me. Let's get you up then. No Bodie, don't rub, just follow me. That's it, you've got it mate, that's the way, there you go. This the beautiful physique you keep telling us about then, never get to see it, do we?"

"Birds do."

"Yeah they do, don't they? Get an eyeful meself sometimes when you're too drunk to care."

"Always care about you Ray."

"Yeah, I know sunshine. Not been too honest about that, have I? Dammit Bodie that's scolding you, look at the colour of your legs, no don't sit down. Let me get some more cold in there. Have to watch you every minute, don't I?"

"Sorry Ray."

"No Bodie, I'm sorry. Should've checked. You've got nothing to be sorry about. Nothing, d'you hear me?"

"Didn't mean to make you angry, sorry Ray, s-sorry."

"No, Bodie, no, 's alright mate. Take it easy. Not angry with you, might've sounded like it, but not angry with you. Must be used to me venting me spleen by now, not going to start letting it get to you after all this time, are you sunshine? You know it doesn't mean anything. Still love you, don't I? You big softy. Oh God Bodie, that was a stupid thing to say. I'm so sorry mate, I didn't mean..."

"It's okay Ray, I know you didn't. I don't care about it anymore. I'm not your type. It doesn't matter."

"Only, the thing is Bodie, you are."

Nothing matters anymore. Doyle will stop fussing soon and then maybe it'll be easy to run another bath. Another nice hot bath. No point in being a nuisance. Less trouble for everyone that way. Cowley will want to let the flat again. Wonder if Doyle would want the books. He's never said. Maybe not, Doyle likes all that socio-political stuff, wrongs of the world dissected. Likes to put things right, does Doyle. Can't put this right. Not a book in the world could fix this, not even Cowley's King James Version.

"Bodie?"

"It's okay Ray, it doesn't matter anymore."

"Bodie, please listen to me."

"No Ray, really. Things are a bit clearer now. Just 'ave me bath and then maybe we can have some of that tea I was supposed to make, eh?"
"Okay Bodie, alright mate, if that's what'll help. I'll leave you to it then, shall I? Come and find me when you're ready?"

"Yeah, 'course. Be nice that. Cup of tea with a mate."

Lean back and soak, let it all drift away. All the things that seemed so important but aren't. The world will turn, the leaves will fall, it'll all go on, nothing stops. Man overboard, lost at sea. The ship sailing on. None of it was ever important. It just seemed like it was at the time, but if you let it go...let it all go...

"Bodie, I need you to listen to me, alright mate?"

Water's cold, water shouldn't be cold. Must've lost a bit of time. Probably should get out now. Skin's all wrinkled. Not really thought about that, razor blade on pruned skin, wonder if it's different? Bet a bird'd know, use 'em all the time in the bath, bloody infuriating when they nick your last one. Just have to work it out for yourself. Can't remember any training. Can't remember much of anything really. Could always use a knife. Doyle's good with a knife. Can't ask 'im though, go off like a rocket.

"Not so sure it's such a great idea, me being in the other room on the couch tonight. Not so sure you should be on your own, might be better if we bunked together."

If he wants to, why not? Won't make a fool of yourself now. Might be nice. Proper send off. Fitting really.

"Only I'm a bit worried."

"No need Ray. It'll be okay. You'll be fine. Settle down, have kids. Be nice that. Just see Cowley playing Grandpa. Kid can have more than one, right?"

"Got it all planned out, have you mate? Let's get you out of that bath first though, eh?"

"Okay Ray. It really is alright you know. 'Bout the other thing, I don't mind. Just nice to be with you."

"Oh God Bodie. Promise me?"

"Promise you what Ray?"

"That I'm making a monumental idiot of myself."

"I've told you Ray. It's okay, doesn't matter, 's long as we can still be mates, the rest is okay."

"How long were you with her Bodie?"

"Was holding her when they locked the door."

"And the Mother?"

"Never saw her."

"There were bodies at the house, in the cellar."

"Maybe one of them. Didn't hear anything, too far away. Walls too thick."
"Okay mate, let's get you into a bathrobe and get some hot tea inside you, before you catch yer-get pneumonia. Can't afford that, can we sunshine?"

"Okay Ray." It was, it really was. Everything seemed so easy now. No pain at all. Floating. Warm and floating with Ray. Be nice to go that way. After everything. "How long Ray?"

"Mmmm?"

"What day is it?" Probably should know that. Like your date of birth or your call sign. The numbers that mean you and no one else. The combination unique, not like your name. How many Williams? How many Billys and Liams? How many tomorrow?

"Oh God Bodie, I'm sorry, I didn't think, it's Tuesday. Three weeks and five days, nearly a month."

_**Wednesday's child is full of woe**, not right that, maybe Thursday, _**Thursday's child has far to go**, more fitting. Don't want to wait an extra day though. The pain might come back, no telling why it went, so no telling if it'll come back. Can't do it at Doyle's mind, not right, have to go back to his own pad. Wednesday then, say goodbye to Doyle, go back to his, and then Wednesday. Plan of action. Back on form.

"Bodie?" careful, cautious. "When did she die? No sunshine, no rubbing, when?"

"They all know, don't they?"

"Know what?"

"You can see it, can't you?"

"See what Bodie, what can we see?"

"She was howling, screaming the place down, hot."

"She was hungry Bodie, she was a baby."

"I couldn't feed her" Doyle's cue, make a joke about equipment. _Please Doyle. Stores, requisitioning, Cowley, expense chits, anything. Just make a joke._

"When did she die Bodie?"

"I don't know."

"How long were you awake?"

"I don't know."

"After she stopped screaming? No. No nodding. Speak to me."

"Yes."

"But she was still alive?"

"I think so" _think so, know so, silent, bird light, bird like, tiny, fluttering ribs._

"No Bodie, don't rub. Just come with me to the kitchen, okay?"

"Okay Ray. I fell asleep."
"I know mate. You couldn't help it. She was alive when you fell asleep, wasn't she? No, don't nod, tell me."

"I don't know how long I was out."

"Okay sunshine, park yourself here, I'll just put the kettle on, see if we can't get a nice cup of tea down you, yeah?"

"She...I kept hold of her Ray, safe until you found me. I kept her safe."

"Yeah, you did mate, you held her for over three weeks, but she wasn't alive any more, was she? No, not with your head, say it."

"I tried to stay awake. I tried Ray. I really tried."

"Yeah, maybe a bit too hard sunshine. You had no hope of saving her. Left you both to rot. Only you're a stubborn prat."

"Survival training."

"I know mate. The doctors think she died about three days in and you never let go, did you?"

"Had to keep her safe."

"Yeah mate, I know, only now I have to keep you safe."

"It's okay Ray. I understand."

"No, I don't think you do sunshine."

"Really Ray, it's okay. It is, really."

"No, because I've been a bit of a prat myself."

"Hardly news that, soft lad. Always have been sin to pass up an open goal like that."

"Yeah, maybe right, 'cos I never did this."

*Ray's lips, soft, too late now. Must be why he's doing this, too late now to matter.*

"You going to kiss me back sunshine?"

"Like to Ray, but it's too late. Everyone can see now."

"Sod 'em."

"No Ray, thought you understood, I killed her and now there's this spot, see? Like Lady Macbeth. Never clean. How can I touch you with hands that will never be clean? So it's alright, doesn't matter anymore."

"How did you kill her Bodie?"

"I...It...not sure, but I held her and now she's dead."

"She needed milk Bodie, water and nutrition. The doctors think you got some water down her, for her to have survived long enough for you to pass out. And you did pass out Bodie. I know you, don't try and sell me that you just nodded off. But it wasn't enough, three, maybe four days at the outside
and she was gone. She was brand new Bodie, weeks old, stood no chance, she was murdered alright, but not by you. We got the bastards for it, but I'll be damned if I'm gonna let them go down for you too."

"I'm not dead."

"But you want to be, don't you sunshine? Because after the flamin' Evian ran out, all you had left was the rainwater seeping through the walls, and you, you mad bastard, you were so bleedin' far gone, you spent the next three weeks trying to feed a dead baby on run off and your usual stash of Fry's bloody chocolate. Isn't that right?"

"It wasn't Fry's"

"Who gives a rat's arse what it was?"

"She wouldn't eat."

"She was dead Bodie. I'm on my knees sorry for it mate, but she was dead, and all I can think is, thank God. Thank God for whatever training you had, whatever it was, said you had to survive in order to save her."

"It's alright Ray, really it is."

"No it's not, and I'm staying bloody well put, until you can tell me who killed her. Clue, Bodie, it wasn't you."

"Why did you kiss me?"

"Because I figured a shag was out of the question, why d'you think?"

*Shaking, can't stop shaking, too much noise, gun shy.*

"Okay Bodie, okay mate. I'm sorry, I've got you. Nothing to get worked up about, just me letting off steam."

"Hard to be with people now."

"Yeah I know mate, but I'm not people am I?"

"Why are you so sorry you love me?"

"What?"

"Before. Said you loved me, and then apologised. Got to admit sunbeam, hardly makes much sense, if you can't see the spot."

"Because, oh God Bodie mate, there is no spot, but you are in pieces and you don't need to deal with that right now, because if you understood how much, it would terrify you. You need your space. I've come close once or twice, but you..."

"...you don't think I'm capable of love?"

"Please sunshine, don't make me say this."

"You think that's why she died? Because I couldn't love her?"
"Bodie, you need to get this good and straight. She died because some evil bastards duped a bunch of left over hippies into letting them take over their Grade II listed Never Never Land, and then panicked when you turned out to be off duty CI5, not the gormless weekend angler they thought you were. I feel sick whenever I think about how close we came to not finding you. God alone knows why they didn't kill you. Cowley thinks they were squeamish about infanticide, and you were left as insurance if they got picked up. Either way, if they hadn't stuck you in that bloody ice house with what was left of your kit, we'd have found two corpses, not one. They all but threw away the key. But, mate, you're not ready to settle down and I don't think you ever will be. I'm ready sunshine. I want to come home to the same person every night. I want to pick out wallpaper and put up shelves. I want to forget George Bastard Cowley and, as sad as it bloody sounds, I want to put my feet up in front of the box with someone I didn't pick up last week and who's not going to dump me next week."

Need to tell him. Need to tell him now, before it all goes away. Before you can't say it anymore. Before it's all too much, need to say it now, make him understand.

"Got to say this Ray, get it out now, so please just listen to me. We've been stuck with each other for four backbreaking, miserable years. I've put up with your temper, your bouts of self loathing, the birds you fall for and the birds you don't, the constant threats to leave CI5, the bloody suicidal undercover jobs, and you know the only thing that scares me, Goldilocks? That I won't have to do it all again tomorrow. You're right, I don't have the first ruddy clue how to be settled. But you do mate, and I've spent just about every minute we've been together, hoping against hope, that you'd get it into that stupid skull of yours to show me."

"You gonna kill yourself?"

"What?"

"Straight forward question Bodie. Are you gonna top yourself? Cos I have to tell you mate, everything I'm getting from the doctors is scaring me witless. Not exactly been firing on all cylinders 'ave you, sunshine? Did a runner soon as we got you out. If that bobby hadn't spotted your car after Cowley put out the alert, would we be dredging the river?"

"You've been talking to the doctors?"

"Yes, I've been talking to the doctors, because I'm terrified I'm gonna drop the ball and let you down."

"As a mate?"

"As a mate, as a partner, as the bloke who's spent four bloody years wondering what you look like when you come."

"Romantic Doyle. No wonder you can't keep a bird for more than a fortnight."

"Okay Mr Hearts and Flowers, how many have you kept?"

"That it, is it?"

"What?"

"Samaritan approved, that technique, is it?"

"If you stop scaring the bloody life out of me and promise just to trust me, then yeah, it probably is."
"I can't promise Ray. I can't predict how I'm gonna feel in the next two minutes, let alone tomorrow or next week. That spot might be invisible to you, but the bloody thing's like – Oh God Ray, it's like acid on my skin."

"I know mate, but lean on me a little, eh?"

"There'll be nightmares."

"I know."

"Mood swings."

"Read the bloody manual, did we?"

"Africa, when I got back. Never bothered me out there. This is worse."

"No Bodie, this is better, because now you have me. If I grab some food and take you to bed, could you rest, eat, maybe get some decent kip?"

"Please, Ray, just hold me."

"Mate, I've never let go."

END

When you knew that it was over
Were you suddenly aware
That the autumn leaves were turning
To the colour of her hair?

The Windmills of Your Mind

(The Windmills of Your Mind - youtube video)

Grade II listed: A listed building, in the United Kingdom, is a building that has been placed on the Statutory List of Buildings of Special Architectural or Historic Interest.
Suicidal thoughts and infanticide are referenced in this story. Please don't read further if this is likely to cause distress.

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