

NOLI ME TANGERE SHOSHANNA

Never touch me. You can look; I like you to look at me. I love you to want me, but never, ever touch me.

Doyle had never said it. He didn't need to. Bodie followed him up the stairs to Cowley's office, dutifully trailing behind to watch the swaying of Doyle's buttocks, moulded firm and separate and succulent by the grey jeans. His cock stirred restlessly, and he twisted his hips as he moved to try to settle it, angrily looking away. A few steps above him, Doyle ran a hand casually through his hair, pulling his gaze back to tangle with Doyle's fingers in the thick curls. It was uncanny, how Doyle seemed to know when Bodie's attention veered aside, just as he knew how Bodie would move in a shootout. Mentally Bodie writhed, caught in a web of helpless, lusting resentment.

Doyle paused at the top of the stairway, ushering him forward with an ostentatious gesture that meant he figured Cowley's mood for sour and was generously allowing Bodie the chance to go in first and sweeten him up. Bodie thanked him as he deserved—a knowing tilt of the head and narrowed eyes, brushing past him and past Betty's desk into the inner office. Doyle shut the door softly behind them.

Cowley's mood was no sourer than usual, Doyle's intuition having failed him this once, and Bodie listened with half an ear to the details of the stake-out they were assigned to. The rest of his senses, all but his sight and that fraction of his hearing, were focussed on his partner, standing so close beside him. Close enough to feel the heat from his body, to hear him breathing, and to know—yes, as they turned to leave came the gesture Bodie had expected, Doyle's arm slung casually, mate-like, across his shoulders.

I can touch you. I like to touch you. But never, never touch me.

Their hips bumped as they walked, and Jax rolled his eyes when he passed them in the hallway, having to turn sideways in the narrow corridor to get by. Doyle was talking, something about his weekend, his date with Wendy, who had turned out to be every bit as athletic as she looked. "My back is killing me," he proclaimed, wincing with ostentatious pride, and Bodie, watching the tanned shoulders pushing against the dark red of his shirt, hyper-aware of the crumpled cotton where the shirttails were jammed carelessly into the waistband of his jeans, against the swell of his arse and the sweet curve of his back, damned himself for the thousandth time even as he spoke.

"Want a backrub, then?"

And Doyle's head turned, his eyes meeting Bodie's in an openness that was so much a lie, a lie like the open empty rooms at Auschwitz with only the showerheads inside, an openness that gaped like crocodile jaws and smiled like them. Doyle smiled, his lips parting ever so slightly against white, white teeth, and shook his head.

"No, thanks, mate." And Bodie's chest burned and ached with an emptiness that filled his body, until he felt on the verge of bursting.

Three years as partners, before he had finally told Doyle about himself. Told him what so few others knew, save a few men here and there over the years, and his father, if the old man hadn't washed the knowledge from his brain with gin by now, hadn't beached his liver on the bitter salt shore of the alcoholic's implacable doom. And Cowley, of course. And Doyle, the only one he'd ever simply told, rather than admitting it, or wordlessly sounding out a like-minded man, or being caught pants down in the most compromising of positions by his da.

"Something you should know, Doyle. I'm

gay."

And Doyle, head tilted, had motionlessly absorbed the words, expression absolutely unchanged. Saying nothing, beyond a toneless murmur of acknowledgement. He had sat a moment, eyes open and impermeable, while Bodie burned with tension and adrenaline skipped and sizzled in his blood like hot oil on a pan; and then he had leaned forward a little in Bodie's old armchair, gazing through the dimness of Bodie's sitting room, where dusk had fallen before Bodie had found the courage to say what he had said. He had leaned forward and propped his elbow on the chair's padded arm, watching Bodie fidget without moving on the couch, and asked one question.

"Do you want me, Bodie?"

And Bodie, burning with strain that was not quite embarrassment, that was not yet rage and not yet despair but that was definitely, oh, so unquestionably, desire, had numbly nodded, had said the word that bound him to the unholy pact Doyle had sealed them in ever since.

"Yes."

And had watched, not yet comprehending, as Doyle gave a tiny smile and sank back into the chair, his legs just slightly more sprawled than before, his chest so open—and his mouth hard, his lips tight and narrowed even as they curved, ever so slightly.

Never touch me, Bodie.

They were in the rest room now, with time to grab a cup of coffee and to glance at the papers before taking over surveillance from Mac and Lucas. Bodie poured himself a cup and handed another to Doyle without asking. His fingers tingled where they touched Doyle's hand across the battered china, and he shoved them into his pocket, hating the longing that grew in him every time he looked at Doyle's body, at the sweet strong lines of his back and arms, the full lips and tousled hair and... He clenched his hand into a fist; the movement pulled the cloth of his trousers tight against his crotch, and his cock throbbed.

Surveillance was the worst. Moving, talking to people or trying to track some lout through the seamy docks of London, he could keep his mind on other things. In a shootout

he never even remembered Doyle's enticing appeal, his own desperate, hopeless lust; and he had begun to like the fights these past few months, begun to look forward to the whine of bullets and the smell of fear and sweat and blood as a respite from the smell of his own need and the wistful, desolate ache in his balls. His cock, at least, knew that he had to be alive to have even the chance of having sex. Even driving required some of his attention, which was why he had taken to habitual speeding.

But a watching post was sheer torment. A creaky lift sullenly delivered them to the fourth-floor surveillance flat, which offered one chair by the window, next to the camera with telescopic lens fixed to the windowframe, and a broken-down couch for the agent off duty. An hour of staring out a window, hearing the little whispering sounds of Doyle moving behind him; and then an hour of nothing to do but watch Doyle, while Doyle watched out the window. Nothing to do but trace the line of Doyle's arm, the jewel-like drops of sweat caught in the crook of his elbow where he had rolled his sleeve up in the sticky August afternoon, and wonder what the glinting beads would taste like on his tongue; nothing to do but talk absently about nothing, nothing that would distract the watcher from his job, or the other watcher from his yearning.

The couch's springs had long since given up all hope of resistance, and Bodie could not sit stiffly upright despite his efforts, but found himself willy-nilly half-sprawled in its passively clinging embrace. His legs had fallen slightly apart, and his cock whimpered and stirred as Doyle shifted in his own seat before the camera, one booted foot propped against the wall, the hard line of thigh muscle shading into hip and buttock clearly visible. Bodie clenched his fist, willing the pulsing away, knowing that somehow Doyle could sense it from across the room, sensed it and was pleased with this further evidence of his desirability, of how much Bodie wanted him.

At first he hadn't understood. At first he had hoped that Doyle's silent reception of his blurted secret, Doyle's tiny smile, meant the acceptance, the receptivity he hadn't dared hope for. He'd learned the truth of that soon

enough. He and Doyle had always touched, casually: a hand on the shoulder, a mock punch to the jaw in retaliation for some particularly ribald joke or boast. But Doyle had moved away from his hand, after that, had shifted out from under the arm across his shoulders, refused the massage that would ease a twisted muscle. And yet, all the while, he had not stopped touching Bodie. If anything, the touches had increased: the hand guiding his, the finger drawn so lightly along the bullet-burned skin of his thigh. Touching lightly, so lightly, until Bodie's cock surged and his hand lifted, seeking, and Doyle, smiling ever so slightly, moved away.

And for another, longer, while, Bodie hadn't understood how Doyle could act so. How could his partner, famous for his guilt-trips and surges of remorse, be behaving so to him, be taunting and teasing him with his body and his movements and always, always that faint twist of his lips, that tiny self-satisfied smile? Even Cowley had been known to say that 4.5 was too hard on himself, and Bodie had had to jolly him out of more than a few bouts of lachrymose self-recrimination, moods where he seemed to take the sins of the world upon his narrow shoulders and suffer for them all. As if he hadn't enough of his own, and as if his own-then, at least-weren't nearly worth the production he made of them.

But even that had come clear to him in time. Doyle fell into black moods of contrition, clammy pits of upwelling guilt, because he felt responsible. After all, one couldn't be guilty of something one wasn't responsible for. And to be responsible meant to have power. Doyle revelled in power in the same way he wallowed in guilt; it was the opposite of the same coin, the dark side of the mirror.

Someday, perhaps, he would come to feel guilty for the way he revelled in his power over Bodie, the way Bodie responded, helplessly, to every flaunting pose. Bodie hoped not. That, he knew, would be more than he could bear. This unspoken, unacknowledged commanding, this lure set for him like a mechanical rabbit before the racing dogs that moved always faster than they could run, he could deal with. He hoped. But if it ever were

spoken of, if the sheet-ice of silence were shattered and Doyle put into words what he said, unspeaking, twenty times a day by the tilt of his head and the flowing line of his hand's turn, Bodie too would shatter. He could deal with this—he hoped—so long as it was all he had to deal with, wishing vainly to club down his surging erection as it tried and tried to span the distance between them. He could fuck a woman or the rare man, he could jerk off at night in the dark and never breathe the name he was calling inside; but if Doyle once laid the weight of his guilt on top of the pain and longing Bodie already carried, if Doyle came to him for absolution as he had for the hostage shot in the fray, for the animals clubbed to make his dinner, it would be unsupportable. The pain of his own balls aching, the wail of his hopeless, helpless longing, those he could deal with. After all, hadn't he, for all this time?

Doyle shifted and stood up from his chair, his hands pressing at the base of his spine as he stretched, arching his back to work the stiffness from his muscles, and Bodie, watching, knew just how those muscles would feel under his hands, under the strong, gripping massage he knew Doyle liked, the kind Bodie had given his partner before this endless game had begun. Doyle stretched and came to stand before Bodie, not quite close enough to be standing between his parted legs, and looked at Bodie looking at him. His eyes moved up the length of Bodie's body, half-reclining in the unsupportive couch, not pausing at the bulge at Bodie's crotch. Bodie kept his hands ostentatiously away from both his partner and himself, one arm along the back of the couch, the other resting beside him. Doyle took a small step, tilting his hips forward ever so slightly, to show how soft and small his own genitals were, how unaffected he was by Bodie's yearning desire. Bodie longed to bury his face there, to smell him and taste him, and roughly he reined his thoughts in, jerked them harshly back to listen to what Doyle was saying.

Which was nothing important, of course. Bodie obediently got up and took his partner's place at the window, listening to Doyle pee in the flat's dingy toilet, trying to keep his eyes fixed on the house across the street and so far below, when most of his mind was wondering which hand Doyle held his cock in, while he urinated. He wrote with his right hand, but he shot with both...and how did he hold it, fingers supporting the gentle curl of pliant flesh, his thumb delicately angling the head as he stood, legs slightly apart, just as he had stood before Bodie only a moment ago?

Bodie's cock was throbbing now, more than half hard and painfully caught under the seam of his trousers. Carefully, longingly he reached down and began to shift it—not to stroke, no, never so close to Doyle, but to ease the pain of flesh twisted and complaining. But as his hand slid across the bulge he heard the gurgling flush and the door opening, and he ripped his hand away from himself with such force that he knew Doyle must have noticed as he came back into the room, still tucking, oh, so casually, his shirt back into his skin-tight jeans. But Doyle only looked at him, as Bodie stared back, feeling naked and vulnerable and all awkward erection and clumsy hands and pleading eyes; and then Bodie pushed himself up and gave Doyle back his position, even though it was his own shift by this time anyway, and bolted for the toilet.

He had meant to jerk off, of course he had, but once there, standing over the gaping porcelain bowl with his keening cock in his hand, harsh light from the bare bulb hammering his eyes, he knew he couldn't. Couldn't, because he knew how thin the door was. knew that Doyle would know what he was doing, in here with the door shut and no sound of pattering urine in the bowl. But the image of Doyle standing where he was standing, only a moment ago, with his cock cradled in his hand as Bodie longed to cradle it, sent stabs of aching arousal through his balls and into the pit of his stomach, rising into his chest and making his lungs burn and his throat thicken. He squeezed his penis hard, until it hurt, and then carefully packed it back into his clothing, settling it as best he could, knowing that he could never hide his desire whether he had an erection or not, and knowing that Doyle liked it that way. He thought for a moment about flushing the

toilet but decided that such uselessly transparent camouflage was worse than nothing, washed his face and hands in the coldest water the tap would yield in the August heat, and, steeling himself, went back into the other room. To watch.

The rest of the afternoon was no more unbearable than any number of others had been before it. His erection diminished eventually, but his longing remained; and whenever he seemed likely to forget, Doyle would be there, stretching his legs or rubbing away the sweat that trickled down his chest, to remind him. Bodie bit the inside of his cheek and kept his hands away from himself, forbade his fingers to curl into fists of helpless fury.

And finally, although the time dragged like molasses, and although in the endless, creeping hours they saw not one movement in the house across the way, finally it was seven o'clock and Jax and Filbert were swinging the door open, calling out incongruously cheery greetings as they prepared to take the evening shift. They were laughing over something, and Filbert was wearing a skirt that showed off the trimness of her waist and the fine, smooth line of her leg; Doyle eyed it and lifted his eyes to Bodie, who lowered his. Doyle said something to her, something gallantly flirtatious with just the right hint of self-satire, and Filbert laughed again and kissed him peremptorily on the mouth before shooing him out. Doyle pursed his lips and glanced again at Bodie, smiling that faint, smug smile.

Bodie had gone ahead—not fleeing, never that, just moving ahead—and held the lift doors open for the other man as he swung himself out of the flat's entrance and sauntered down the hall. He was carrying one hand before him, and as he fell in beside Bodie and the lift doors groaned unwillingly shut, he showed him the small welling of blood, ruby-red, on his fingertip. "Splinter from the door-frame," he informed his partner, and then put the finger, oh, so slowly, into his mouth, and closed his lips around it.

Bodie's knees trembled. He stared, riveted, at the faint hollows in Doyle's cheeks as he sucked, and his cock awoke and surged demandingly against its cloth confinement. Doyle's finger was wet and shiny against his lips, and Bodie wanted to suck it, and his cock was wailing now, all the desire of the day and the month and the three years pounding in his groin; he fell back against the wall of the lift and leaned there, his head spinning like a weathervane in a gale. "Doyle..."

And Doyle smiled, ever so slightly, around the hard wet finger in his mouth.

Bodie's left hand slammed against the emergency stop button, and the lift ground to a halt, halfway between floors. Doyle's eyes never left his.

Never touch me. Want me.

Bodie groaned, and his other hand left its white-nailed press against the wall, stooping like a falcon freed from hood and jesses to fasten on the aching bulge of his cock. He caught his breath in surprise as much as pleasure, and in torment more than either. Doyle's eyes widened, but he didn't move.

Bodie was helpless now, one hand rubbing over his fly, shoving and pressing against his hard need, the other flat against the wall, trying to maintain his balance. He felt dizzy; the motionless lift seemed to be plummeting into some undreamed-of depths where anything might happen, anything at all... He realized that his zip was undone, his trousers gaping open and his cock pushing through, searching for his touch, and for Doyle who stood, smiling faintly, watching him. He pushed his pants aside and took the shaft in his hand, palm against bare skin, and stroked himself, moaning.

Doyle took his finger out of his mouth and let his hands fall to his sides. Bodie slid his hand along the taut curve of his need, cupping the head, and stared at Doyle as if his gaze would burn. The green eyes held his a moment longer, and then Doyle looked away, glancing down to watch Bodie's hand working the length of his cock. That freed Bodie's gaze to move down the curve of Doyle's jaw, to slide along the tendons of his neck where Bodie longed to trail his tongue, and to come then to the wrinkled red cotton that rose and fell, evenly, with Doyle's breathing. Hair curled invitingly in the open neck of his shirt, half-hiding under the cloth to brush against it,

whispering of heady, forbidden things.

Bodie dragged in a rasping breath. "Open your shirt."

That seemed to startle Doyle, for a moment. His eyes jerked up to Bodie's face, and his lips tightened briefly. Bodie knew what he was saying, and couldn't bear to have it spoken aloud.

"Please," he said hoarsely, and hated himself for begging. But for Doyle to put anything into words would be worse. "Let me see your nipples."

And as Bodie had known it would, that made it better. Let me look, he had implored. *Look. Don't touch.*

Slowly, as the movement of Bodie's hand slowed to match, Doyle's fingers moved to the buttons of his shirt. Slowly he undid them, starting from the top, so that the cotton gaped open and the curly hair spread lush and thick, and Bodie's hand tightened, imagining the curls scratchy against his chest. Or his back. Doyle's hands moved downward, pulling the shirt from his jeans to undo the last two buttons, then freeing the cloth in back as well, so that it hung limp and open, like a veil, trembling with his breathing. Bodie trembled against the wall.

And Doyle, slowly, unspeaking, pulled the cloth aside, half off his shoulders so that his chest was bare and his nipples were revealed, nestled among the curls, pinkish-brown and small, tender and inviting. Bodie licked his lips, watching them, imagining them hard and erect in his mouth, knowing that Doyle knew what he was fantasizing, and his hand moved faster on his cock and his breath caught in his throat. He stared, blocking out everything else except the tantalizing nubs of flesh not a meter from his mouth, as Doyle faced him from the opposite wall of the lift. His cock was arching up, pushing into his hand as he pumped it, oozing precome so that he slicked his palm over his cockhead and gasped with the sharp stab of pleasure, moaning again.

Doyle's hands were hanging by his side again, empty. Bodie knew he was going to come soon, could feel the orgasm roiling in his balls and stretching the skin of his cock like a balloon swelling, ready to burst. But he **NOLI ME TANGERE £3£3£3**SHOSHANNA

didn't want to come, and not only because the pleasure, the desperate yearning pleasure of watching Doyle watch him as he pulled his cock was so achingly wonderful, not only because he could tell this orgasm would shake his teeth in his jaw when it hit. He didn't want to come because he had no idea how he and Doyle could possibly deal with each other after this, after he had finally broken under the unspoken unadmitted flaunting and done this right under Doyle's nose. He didn't want it to end, because the end of this might be the end of everything.

And if it was going to be the end of everything, he would have everything that he could get. Both hands were moving on him now, his left cradling his balls, massaging and rolling them to ease the pressure, feeling them tighten and draw up to the shaft of his cock; he wished he could reach to get a finger or two up his ass, but with his trousers still tangled around his thighs it was impossible. But he wanted more. He licked his lips, wishing for some part, any part, of Doyle in his mouth.

"Undo your trousers."

No hesitation this time, just the slow, considered movement of thin artist's hands to the button of the grey jeans. Bodie squeezed his cockhead convulsively as Doyle slid his zip down and pushed the tight fabric a little off his hips. He hooked his thumbs under the elastic of his pants and slid it down until the profusion of pubic hair could be seen; Bodie

was gasping now, his hand moving in short jerky sweeps, his eyes riveted to the soft swell of cock that was barely revealed above the white briefs. One hand drifted upward and Bodie wrenched his gaze away to follow it; Doyle stroked a finger across his nipple, watching Bodie all the while, and then let his hands fall again. Bodie stared again at Doyle's half-hidden penis, letting it fill his vision, imagining he could smell it, taste it, feel it in his mouth as he longed to do, and knowing that Doyle watched every motion he pumped fiercely on his own arousal, longing to crush himself against the soft inviting musk of Doyle's crotch, crying out now as he gasped, as his hands moved, squeezing his balls and clutching desperately at himself and with a convulsive, choking yell he climaxed, the semen spurting between his fingers and arcing through the air to splatter on the dingy floor. Doyle moved aside, avoiding it.

Panting harshly, Bodie slowed his hands, feeling his flesh go limp and sodden, his fingers sticky. He slumped back against the wall and wiped his hands on his pants. His heart was pounding. He was afraid to look up, so he forced himself to.

Doyle was tucking his shirt back into his trousers, zipping himself neatly away. He met Bodie's eyes calmly, then glanced down at the splash of semen on the floor, and beside it his boots pristine, untouched. He smiled, faintly.

for the Glaswegian and her partner