

TALLIS

AND ALL THE SECRETS



This is the first of the Professionals pieces. Tallis says it was inspired by constant daily listening to U2's song Love is Blindness. After a year or so of subjecting herself to the song, And All the Secrets just erupted from her brain. And so somewhat like Bodie in the story, Tallis didn't have a choice. She had to write!



RAY DOYLE AWOKE to the sound of rain pattering unrelentingly on the window pane

and the smell of bacon frying. One slender hand snaked its way out of the untidy mass of covers piled on the bed to scratch drowsily at his nose. He opened his eyes just long enough to read the time on the watch on his wrist. Three hours he'd been asleep. Shouldn't've slept so long, ought to get up. He yawned and scrunched back under the warmth of blankets, ready to drift back for a few more minutes of uninterrupted half-sleep. His head sinking contentedly into the pillow, he was peripherally aware of the thud of footsteps clumping up the stairs, the creak of the door swinging open and the rattle of china and silverware. The smell of bacon grew stronger, insinuating itself into the cozy warmth surrounding him. A muffled grunt accompanied by a dangerous swaying of the bed almost rolled him onto his side and announced the arrival of his very awake and very bulky partner.

"Oi, Doyle." Bodie chirruped brightly. "Rise and shine, sleepyhead."

"Go 'way" Doyle grumbled, trying to fumble the blankets over his head. But his big lump of a partner was sitting on a corner of them and they were going nowhere, pinned by the sheer mass of Bodie.

"Now is that any way to treat room service, mate?" Bodie asked amid the rattle of crockery. "Brought you brekkers in bed." And he plopped a laden tray of eggs, bacon, and toast

unceremoniously on Doyle's supine form.

Doyle stared at him with narrowed eyes.

"This is your wake up call, petal. Half five, as requested." Bodie plucked a slice of toast from the tray and managed to stuff most of it in his mouth. "Time to rise and shine and greet the new day. To say nothing of Cowley who'll be here in twenty minutes." He grinned as Doyle struggled to sit up without upending the tray all over himself.

"Shit." Doyle scrambled to untangle himself from the huge pile of bedclothes, fettered by the tray and Bodie. "Get off the covers, you lug, and lemme out of here."

"What's your rush?" Bodie asked, poking a large strip of bacon into his mouth as Doyle, still clad in yesterday's rumpled jeans and T-shirt, finally extricated himself from the bed and stood on firm, if naked, footing in the chill of early dawn.

"Oh, yeah," he said dropping to his knees and reaching under the bed. "We're supposed to be minding this Cheltenham bloke—" his muffled voice drifted up from underneath the coverlet.

"—sleeping like a babe—" Bodie pointed out.

Doyle pulled a sock and two trainers from under the bed. "—from all and sundry villains and nasties—"

Bodie eyed another strip of bacon. "—if babes snore and wheeze in their sleep—"

"—and the Cow'll walk in," Doyle popped out from under the covers, second sock in hand, "and find us having a nice little lie in instead of keeping watch on his prize witness." Sitting on the cold floor he jammed a foot into the balled up sock.

“Don’t know about you mate, but I want to live long enough to leave this fucking safehouse and—”

“Oh, is that what this is?” Bodie sighed as he lifted the last broken bit of bacon to his mouth. “I’d been wondering what we were doing here, up all night with guns and all.”

“Bloody hell, Bodie,” Doyle said angrily as he viciously yanked tight the laces of his trainer. “Why didn’t you get me up sooner?” He glared up at Bodie who sat on the bed, wide-eyed, licking thumb and forefinger in turn.

“What? And have you lose a single, precious moment of your beauty sleep? Tut, tut, Raymondo...” There was a sudden squeal of tires outside and the sound of a revving engine. Before thought had time to register, the two men were racing out onto the landing and down the stairs, guns drawn and faces intent. The roar of gunfire tore into the quiet morning as the front door splintered and a booted foot kicked it in. Bodie quickly edged his way down the hallway while Doyle circled through the small kitchen, both of them ready to enter, weapons blazing. Amid the noise and chaos, a disheveled, pajama clad figure with greying hair and a look of panic came out from the room off the side and stood, dazed, too scared to move.

“Get back!” Bodie shouted hoarsely from the door. “Get back, you fucking moron!” But the man was immobilized, terrified perhaps by the knowledge that death had tracked him here, to this supposed safehouse where that bastard Cowley had sent him to wait out the endless days before the trial. The intruder had already let loose a barrage of bullets as Bodie watched Chelten slam back against the door jamb, a look of surprise in his eyes, and crumple to the floor, trails of blood streaking the painted woodwork behind him. Bodie easily shot the gunman, bullets tearing into flesh, momentum spinning the body around. Doyle had burst from the kitchen, adding his own impetus to the flailing dance in the center of the room.

The silence was thunderous.

Holstering their guns they stood staring at each other. “Fuck.” Doyle said succinctly.

“Yeah,” replied Bodie, pulling out his RT. “Alpha One. Three-seven...”

By the time he arrived, Cowley had calmed to a dull roar, scowling his way into the crowded house, flipping the sheet unemotionally back to view the dead Chelten, and finally turning his sour

gaze toward his sullen agents idling in the small kitchen.

“How did he find you?” Cowley asked Doyle, who only shrugged and grimaced, hands stuffed into jacket pockets.

“Dunno, sir,” Bodie answered for his partner. “No one knew where he was and we kept our heads down getting here. By the book, sir.”

Cowley grunted. Chelten was the key witness in a case they had all put interminable hours into and his death was going to cripple it. Wasted effort, Cowley thought angrily. But what gnawed at him was how the gunman had known where they were keeping him. As Bodie had said, *by the book*, and he knew the two of them would have been scrupulously careful. He didn’t like loose ends like this. He walked over to the mute gunman, wishing the man could speak. All he said was, “Did you have to kill him quite so dead?”

“DAMN!” Doyle spat as he thumped his glass down on the table. They’d returned to Bodie’s flat after exhausting hours tracking down a dozen dead ends. Nothing. No ID on the gunman and not a murmur on the street about who had commissioned the hit, or how. Bodie just sighed. “How the fuck did they know where to find us? We were as careful as—”

“You’ve said all this before, Doyle,” Bodie said impatiently, twisting his glass in his hand. “Quit worrying it.”

“But it just doesn’t make any sense,” Doyle replied, rising once again to pace the room, Bodie’s dark eyes following his taut form as he bounced from chair to table to window and back to chair again.

Leaning forward in the stuffed chair Bodie grated, “Sit down, for christ’s sake. ‘M getting tired watching you.” He took a slow swallow of beer. “You’ll wear out my carpet.” Doyle looked down at the ugly, speckled brown carpet and raised an eyebrow at Bodie.

Bodie was as tense as Doyle and just as curious as to how anyone could have traced them to the safehouse with Chelten when they had covered their tracks so thoroughly. But it wasn’t in Bodie’s nature to rehash the day, cooped up in his sitting room. He wanted action, movement, a physical release. What he needed was a good hard fuck to make him forget. He ringed the narrow, tapered glass with two fingers, slowly sliding them up and

down the hard, smooth surface. He closed his eyes briefly, imagining the feel of flesh pounding into flesh, the smell of sweat and cum to dispel the lingering memory of blood. He felt a tingle of arousal sweep through him, his cock twitching slightly at the idea. He sank back in the chair, eyes narrowing as he viewed the slender figure of his partner prowl the room.

They'd talked about it once, briefly and cautiously, on a long stake-out when they'd sat up all night over a strip club, the thrumming bass of the band filtering up through the floorboards. Through the muted vibrations and after much cajoling from a bemused Bodie, Doyle had warily admitted that he liked to fuck men, not exclusively, but enough. Bodie had held the confession close, rolling it around in his brain alone at night, a sweet, secret pleasure.

"Jesus, Bodie," Doyle turned on him. "We let the poor fucker get killed. It shouldn't've happened." He moved back to the window, running a hand along the edge of the curtain, peering out into the gloomy dusk, streetlight sheening off the wet streets.

"But it did. So leave it." Bodie shifted in his chair. His skin felt hot and a prickle of sweat slithered down his nape.

"S not that easy for me, y'know," and Doyle came to stand in front of Bodie, one arm wrapped across his chest, hand gripping his other arm. His narrow hips tilted provocatively, his crotch inches away from Bodie's face.

A spark ignited.

His brain screaming and his cock throbbing, Bodie forced himself to move, dragging his gaze up the sinuous body. Their eyes locked and held for long moments, a vicious half-smile on Doyle's lips.

Then Doyle started to spin away in retreat but Bodie grabbed his wrist, holding him locked in an iron grip. Doyle stared down at him, anger filling his features. The touch burned; Doyle's heat branding his skin. "It wasn't our fault, Doyle," Bodie said furiously, his anger hotter than that heat, hot enough to damp it down.

Doyle glowered and pulled away. "It was our fault. We should've seen it coming, been more careful. Then old Chelton would still be living the sweet life and we wouldn't have Cowley breathing fire down our necks."

Infinitely tired of arguing with Doyle, Bodie stood. He wanted to shut Doyle's mouth. The best

way would be to stuff it with something. A thought whispered through his body: his cock, ram it down Doyle's throat. The heat was back. "Dammit, Doyle!" he grated out. "I said let the bloody thing alone. You'd think we'd put the gun to his head ourselves!"

Mid-stride, an angry Doyle spun, fists balled. "We might just as well have done for all the good we did," he half-shouted, pent up fury rolling off him like waves of desert heat.

Needing to move, to put some distance between himself and Doyle, Bodie stepped over to stand near the door. The room was close and hot. The sounds of wet traffic slooshing by outside filtered into the tense silence.

"You fucking don't care do you?" Doyle glared at him. Still pacing, he added, "He's just another meaningless statistic to you, isn't he?"

"Don't be bloody stupid." Bodie ran a hand tiredly back through his hair. "Of course I care. Makes us look like rank amateurs when someone gets snuffed right under our noses." He stared at Doyle, back militarily rigid, hands dangling at his sides.

Anger flaring through him, Doyle crossed the small room in several quick strides and grabbed Bodie by the fabric of his shirt, pushing him forcefully against the wall. The hollow thump of Bodie's body slamming the wall echoed in an eerie, momentary stillness of twilight. "That's it, isn't it? You're only concerned because his death makes *you* look bad."

Faces inches apart, Bodie's nostrils caught the slightly acrid smell of Doyle's uneven breath. "Shut up, Doyle." Bodie snapped, hands lifting to unsuccessfully push his partner away. As Doyle took a small sideways step, his hip and groin pressed into Bodie's thigh and with a shock of recognition, Bodie realized Doyle was erect and hard. The feel of Doyle's hardness against him, the heat of his hands pressing against Bodie's chest, brought a surge of arousal to Bodie. His hands tightly gripping Doyle's upper arms, he stared into Doyle's eyes, watching the flush rise on the uneven features. Slowly, deliberately, arms straining with the effort, Bodie pushed a resisting Doyle down until he was on his knees, eyes level with Bodie's bulging crotch. Risking a countermove from his partner, Bodie released one hand to unfasten his belt and zip. He pulled free his hard, dark cock. Doyle's breathing had quickened but he was staring at the

wall off to the side. "Look at me," Bodie demanded, oddly enraged and excited by this challenge. "Time to pay up now, sunshine." One hand clenched tightly in Doyle's curls, the other lightly caressing his hardness, he forced Doyle's defiant head towards his arching cock, the glistening tip nudging dumbly at unrelenting lips. Twisting his hand in Doyle's hair he hissed, "Suck me."

Doyle dropped his gaze to the prodding flesh and slowly opened his mouth, his tongue sliding out to lick the head of the throbbing cock. A guttural moan escaped from between Bodie's clenched teeth and a small smile crossed Doyle's face. Then, Doyle took the cock into his mouth, wrapping his lips and tongue around the shaft, suckling it, worshipping it, seeming to drown in the dark scent of Bodie's arousal. Tugging, he dragged the obstructing clothes halfway down Bodie's muscular thighs. One hand slipped up to graze Bodie's hip and then purposefully slid round to stroke his taut arse, a finger running slowly up and down the crack, tickling, teasing at the sensitive hole, making Bodie quiver and twitch.

Both of his hands entwined in Doyle's hair, Bodie pulled the mouth close and away, forcing Doyle to engulf his needy cock, and then pulling him back to let the cool air tingle over his nerves. He watched transfixed as Doyle's cheeks filled and hollowed as they sucked Bodie in. The sounds of sucking and gurgling, of wet balls slapping Doyle's chin intertwined with the soft moans and sharp rasps of Bodie's pleasure. Grunting, shoulders pushed up against the wall, his hips jutted forward to allow the probing finger access to the tight channel of his arse. Doyle had two fingers inside him, rotating and scissoring them, his tongue and lips laving the trembling cock, immersing Bodie in an unending cocoon of pleasure. Looking down at Doyle in supplication, he thrust his hips fractionally to force his cock further into the dark warmth of Doyle's gulping throat.

With the hard wall against his shoulders, the light switch digging into his shoulderblade was a necessary counterpoint to the sweet friction of tongue and teeth on his cock. An unquenchable pleasure began uncoiling through his muscles, his bones quivering, his skin electric with sensation. Suddenly stiffening, his fingers grasping Doyle's scalp painfully, his arsehole shuddering tightly on the invading fingers, Bodie came, his seed spilling

out in pulsating bursts into the eager mouth. Tension gone from his body, Bodie finally released his hold on Doyle. His limp cock fell from Doyle's mouth, a sticky string of semen and saliva connecting the tip of it to Doyle's mouth. Calmly, Doyle wiped the back of his hand across his lips, cleaning away the dribbles of drying cum.

Apart from Bodie's harsh breathing, the room was silent. Bodie half opened his eyes to see Doyle staring up at him, eyes dark and wild, one hand rubbing at the fabric over his hard cock. Doyle reached up and, with a determined tug, jerked Bodie's trousers and pants the rest of the way down. His hands pulled at Bodie's hips until Bodie slid down the wall to his knees. Without comment, Doyle maneuvered him until he was positioned on all fours, legs slightly apart, his pale buttocks upthrust in the lamplight. Fumbling with his own trousers, Doyle managed to get the belt undone and the zip down, his own cock straining and glistening. Spitting loudly into his palm, he rubbed his heated flesh and then centered the thick head, foreskin peeled back to reveal the rosy tip, on the pucker of tight muscle, slowly easing in.

Bodie bit the side of his mouth, focusing on the sharpness of pain and tang of blood.

Doyle sheathed himself halfway and paused, gasping for breath. Whispering "I'm goin' to fuck you into the floor, cunt," into Bodie's ear, he gripped him tightly by the hips and leaned forward, pushing his cock all the way in, no longer able to stay still. He plunged in and out, the hot channel gripping his cock, his balls slapping into Bodie's arse.

Bodie was on his knees and elbows, his arse high in the air as Doyle thrust over and over again into his flesh. Taunting, he gasped, "C'mon Doyle. Fuck me. Fuck me harder." He felt a sharp sting on his asscheeks from the flat of Doyle's hand. Teeth gritted, muscles trembling, he urged Doyle on. "Harder, Doyle. Harder." The rough edges of Doyle's zipper cut into the tender flesh of his arse leaving bright marks.

Pounding viciously into the reddening flesh, back arched and mouth open and panting, Doyle fucked Bodie with an impassioned fervor. His hold on restraint almost gone, he reamed into the pliant arse and came with a rumbling wail.

Drained and panting, Doyle's cock slipped from the warm envelope of Bodie's arse and he fell back against the wall, eyes closed, damp hair

plastered across his cheeks.

The air in the room felt cool on Bodie's face. He rustled as he shifted position, then, with a tentative touch, he gently rubbed a finger up Doyle's cheek, his thumb lightly caressing the corner of Doyle's mouth. Doyle opened his eyes. Bodie hunkered in front of him, staring intensely. A small smile swept over the pale features and just as quickly disappeared behind a wall of neutrality. They stayed like that, a still tableau in the silent room.

MID-AFTERNOON, the rain had finally relented for a brief time. Walking the few streets back to HQ after a quick, late lunch, Bodie felt a little light-headed, as if the illicit pleasure of walking alongside Doyle in the crisp, winter air might dissipate as rapidly as the pale, grey sun.

"So the guy's a small-time hitman for Leaman's mob and Leaman was worried about what Cheltenham knew about his business dealings," Doyle continued the lunchtime discussion. "But why a suicide run? 'S not very good for business."

A series of busses rumbled past, spewing diesel and passengers. An icy breeze sent a waft of after-shave mixed with fumes past Bodie. "Doesn't build a lot of confidence in your clientele," Bodie smiled. "But it really doesn't matter who he was, Doyle." They walked side by side, almost touching, occasionally separating to weave through the throngs of people rushing to get somewhere before the rains began to fall again.

"Or why he'd be stupid enough to do it."

"Yeh. He should just be glad he died before Cowley got to 'im." Bodie felt an electricity between them as their shoulders brushed. His mind slipped into its favorite pastime of the last week, images of sex with Doyle, hot, slippery memories, a tingle of arousal spiralling through his veins. The image of Doyle, on the precipice of orgasm, head thrown back, body impaled on Bodie's burning cock, sweat sliding down Doyle's chest and hips to pool in the writhing hollows of Bodie's belly.

"Yeh. Guess the question still is how the hell they found us." Doyle skirted a small puddle on the pavement.

"Bastards could've gotten incredibly lucky and chanced on it or..."

"Or they had to have inside information."

Veering closer to Doyle to avoid a large man weighted down with carrier bags, Bodie imagined

he could feel the heat of Doyle beside him. "Yeh, but it was a new safehouse, wasn't it? The cover couldn't've been blown yet." Doyle's hand brushed against his, knuckles lightly grazing the back of it. Bodie's heart thumped a little faster at the touch. He allowed a wave of anticipation to sweep through him at the thought of the sweaty nights to come. He turned to look at Doyle, to share the secret knowledge but Doyle seemed unaware of the contact, head turned to gaze into the shop windows they passed. Bodie gave a small frown, a frisson of uncertainty running up his spine.

"Eh, fancy a drink tonight, Bodie?" Doyle asked. "After this meeting with Cowley?" He seemed so unaffected by their change in status, so casual about what to Bodie was the culmination of the sweetest passion he had ever known. What if Doyle decided he wasn't good enough after all? What if he thought Bodie wasn't worth sticking around for? He cast another quick glance at his partner, the dark curls framing his face bouncing with the rhythm of his walk, mouth set in a half-smile as they dodged round a short, pudgy woman pushing a pram.

Leaning into his partner, Bodie remarked, "Mmm. Fancy more'n a drink," his eyebrow rising in his best come hither look. Doyle graced him with a jab in the ribs and a scowl.

Arriving early for the briefing with Cowley and several other senior agents over preliminaries for a special security op, they sat in silence at the large, pocked table. There was a chill in the gloomy, high ceilinged room.

Cowley, dressed in his black velvet-collared overcoat, began the meeting precisely on time. Bodie shifted in his seat, the aged wood creaking with his weight. Doyle was seated next to him at the table, loose limbs in a sprawl. How could he sprawl in these straight backed chairs, Bodie wondered, catching a glimpse of the long line of legs and torso. While Cowley's voice droned on about checks and perimeters and manpower, Bodie's mind drifted back to what was so ill-concealed by those tight jeans. Doyle's voice broke into his reverie.

"Has anyone taken into account the buildings to the southwest...?"

Bodie's mind sidled back to musing about the long, strong fingers tapping on the tabletop. Fingers that were so adept at wringing pleasure from him. Fingers that had teased his nipples and

ringed his cock.

Abruptly, he felt a sharp, swift pain in his right shin and jolted back to the present and the circle of faces staring expectantly at him. Doyle, quick-witted and surefooted, had kicked him in desperation. His eyes focused on the pursed mouth and piercing eyes of his boss.

“That was a direct question, Bodie, but as you’ve apparently been struck dumb, perhaps your partner is capable of answering it. Well, Doyle?”

And again there was a bruising swift kick, of punishment this time, as Doyle glibly set out more ideas on the op.

Chagrined, Bodie tried to concentrate on the discussion.

Finally exiting the building, feeling like a kid let off for half-term, Bodie rushed his partner into the cold evening, one hand draped over Doyle’s shoulders, the other stuffed in his coat pocket, nervously fingering the car keys. They walked the short distance to the nearest pub as the evening traffic swirled around them.

“Brilliant move in there, mate,” Doyle muttered to him as they crossed the road, dodging taxis and honking cars. “What the hell were you thinking?”

“Ah, c’mon, Ray,” Bodie said, unwilling to divulge what he’d really been thinking about. “It was just the same old lecture. ‘S nothing complicated about this op.”

“How would you know?” Doyle countered. “You didn’t hear half of it, squirming about in your seat like a kid. You’re acting like we could handle this with our hands tied behind our backs.”

“Oh. Fancy a bit of bondage, petal?” Bodie smiled his most smugly gleeful smile. “Ouch!” he yelped as Doyle elbowed him in the side.

“Idiot!” Doyle grinned and pushed the heavy door of the pub open for Bodie.

Scanning the room quickly, Bodie was secretly pleased to find that the only single females in the pub were a pair of overdressed, middle-aged women drinking vodka and limes.

Heading towards the bar, Doyle looked around hopefully then let out a disgusted snort. “Not a single decent bird in here.” He shook his head and frowned. “Two half-pints, please,” he said to the barman.

Bodie leaned in, resting one hand on Doyle’s shoulder, and said into his ear, “Thought you weren’t looking for decent—more like indecent.”

Doyle let out a filthy little chuckle, picked up the

two glasses and headed for an empty table.

They sat in the corner of the bar, Bodie telling fabulous lies and crude jokes, jealously trying to entertain Doyle. Every time the door opened Doyle would look up to see if anyone interesting had entered. He seemed fidgety, thumping his fingers against the edge of the table, playing with the cardboard coaster. His knee brushed against Bodie’s thigh, sending a shiver straight to Bodie’s groin. Bodie knew Doyle wanted a good fuck tonight. So why were they sitting here, not really drinking, when they could be back at Bodie’s flat, ensnared in the heat of each other.

“How ‘bout the other half, mate?” Doyle asked with a nod toward his empty glass.

Bodie wasn’t really in the mood for getting drunk but wasn’t about to go home without the prize of Doyle. He stood and headed for the bar anyway.

Settling back in, he noticed Doyle’s eyes follow an elegantly dressed woman as she crossed the room. Approaching a man she obviously knew, she settled a hand on his shoulder and let out a little laugh, her dark hair falling in front of her face. Sighing, Doyle leaned back in his chair.

Tired and a little worried that Doyle might actually find someone and slip off without him, Bodie leaned across the small table and in a low voice began a long, involved and very erotic tale, a true Bodie confection.

“All lies...” Doyle laughed.

“No, I swear it’s all true, Ray,” he concluded to Doyle’s interjections. He smiled smugly, pleased to have diverted Doyle away from his surroundings. “She could go at it for hours. Something to do with yoga—”

“Stop, stop, Bodie,” a grinning Doyle interrupted. “You’ve got me going something awful. ‘M goin’ to embarrass myself right here and now if you don’t stop,” he added, shifting uncomfortably in his seat.

“C’mon, Ray,” Bodie said wickedly. “I know how to fix this,” and he rubbed his hands together gleefully.

“What, you’ve got an easy solution to a hard problem?” Doyle snorted and stood, joining him in the shallows of inebriation.

“Things might be hard just at the moment...” Bodie continued, and, with a hand in the small of Doyle’s back, propelled him into the night.

Lying in the semi-dark watching the faint rise

and fall of Doyle's chest and the dark shadow of curls splayed across the pillow, Bodie shifted to his side. A small pleasure crept through him. Doyle was coming around. This time he hadn't risen after the brief, exhausted sleep after sex and dressed to return to his own flat. Yeh. This time was different. Bodie felt it.

The clouds in the night sky reflected back the light of the city, bathing the room in a faint glow. The sex was intense and as good as he'd ever had. Lyrical. If he were of a poetic turn, that's how he'd describe it. He slowly ran his hand over Doyle's chest, not quite touching, hovering just above the slow-beating heart. It felt as though they had achieved some primal connection, reaching beyond words and thought to create a carnal language.

Rolling onto his back, he stretched and pulled the blankets back up. Smiling, he waited for dawn.

THE RESTROOM at CI5 headquarters was unusually quiet. A small group sat at a table speaking in low voices about the latest in guns, women and football. The dampness of the grey drizzle outside permeated the room, the plop plop of drops on the windowsill adding a counterpoint to the muffled conversations. Murphy was propped in a faded, overstuffed chair, head tilted at a neck-breaking angle, mouth partially open, occasionally punctuating his snoring with a snuffle. Jax arrived in a bluster, moaning out loud about his exile in records, the result of too close a call with Cowley. Murphy awoke with a snort, stretched his long frame and rose. He was pouring a cup of what passed for coffee when a puffing, red-faced agent came charging in.

"Eh, Jonesie," Murphy called. "Cow after you or something?"

"No. Listen," the young agent urged in a serious tone, eyes darting around the room. "I've just come from the computer ops room. Word's just out." His urgent tone cut through the chatter in the room and the attention of the agents shifted.

"What's up, mate?" asked Jax, wandering over and settling on the arm of the sofa. Jonesie nervously looked over his audience. "Well, you know how they've been running a security sweep through most of the agencies?" It was a standard thing, just another run of positive vetting and keeping an eye out for any possible misconduct. Nothing out of the ordinary. They'd all been through these a dozen times before. Not much

ever came of them. "This time they *found* something."

"What?" asked Murphy. "Lucas been caught snapping dirty pictures again?" A few snickers erupted.

"No. This is real," insisted Jonesie. "They've found a leak. In CI5..."

The door opened and Bodie waltzed in followed by a chuckling Doyle. "Hey lads, did you hear about Fiona down in—"

"Shut up, Bodie," Jax barked. "Jonesie here's got some news."

"Well, if it's about Fiona and the Norwegian bloke I heard it first," Bodie said heading for the coffee pot. Doyle grinned, joining the crowd and swinging a muscular leg over to straddle a chair. Bodie scowled at the coffee but poured a cup anyway.

"Go on, Jonesie," urged Jax.

"It's about Humphries," he continued. "In Ops. Seems he'd been havin' it off with a bloke he met in some pub. Turns out he was being blackmailed and was giving them operations info to keep 'em quiet."

There was a general clamor in the room as the agents let loose their surprise and disbelief. "Fucking queer," someone muttered. Doyle went white, all color draining from his face. He gripped the back of the chair with a strength that would have shattered anything else. Bodie, standing with a cup of coffee in his hand was rigid, his face pale and taut. He silently placed the cup on the table beside him. His heart was pounding furiously but his face was expressionless, unreadable. What the fuck had they gotten themselves into, he thought. If a low-level sweep pulled up something of this magnitude then Cowley would probably authorize a full blown one. *Always make sure your own house is in order.* He looked over at where Doyle was sitting. There was an unmistakable rigidity in his partner's back and shoulders. He needed desperately to talk to Doyle, to reassure him.

"Hey, Doyle," Murphy mumbled. "Must be how they found Chelten." Doyle turned his wide gaze toward Murphy, never uttering a word.

"Yeh," Jonesie added. "He had access to information on just about every operation. Poor sod must've been scared to death he'd be found out. Told 'em everything they wanted to know."

Yeh, thought Bodie. Of course he would. The little bugger. What if...? Could've been me, just as

easily. Could've been *us*. And a shiver ran up his spine, knowing that was exactly what Doyle would be thinking.

"Shit, bet the Cow's screaming bloody murder over this," Jax said.

Murphy nodded assent. "Yeh, he'll get rid of 'im faster than a fart."

"Jeez. A fuckin' queer! How'd he ever get into CI5 in the first place?" someone asked. Doyle turned to look at the speaker and Bodie's blood froze at the look of absolute impenetrableness on his partner's face.

"Well, he's done for, anyway," Murphy said. "There's nowhere else for him to go. Who's goin' to hire you after this mob?" It was true. To get into CI5 you had to be close enough to the edge to see the drop. It was a collection of misfits and outcasts. Getting kicked out of CI5 was akin to being black-listed. If you couldn't cut it with Cowley's brigade, then you must be a right nutter, not fit for anything else.

He risked another glance at Doyle and saw the tendons in his hands standing out in stark relief. Those hands... He swallowed hard, felt panic rising inside him. Doyle would not look at him, would not acknowledge his presence in the same room except by his exclusion of him. Just like Da, he thought, a faded memory of his father turning away from him, back as stiff and unbending as Doyle's, surfacing.

A voice broke into his thoughts. "I thought there was something not quite right with him."

Murphy retorted, "Oh, yeah. You can spot a poofter 20 meters away!"

"Naw. But you just *know*."

Do they know? Bodie felt a tremor of paranoia sweep over him. Could they tell?

Rising from the sofa, Jax commented, "So he liked a bit of the other. It's legal, y'know."

"Not in Cowley's brigade, it's not," chortled Murphy.

"Oh, c'mon. The security services are full of 'em," Jax said, pouring a cup of coffee. "Why, I knew a bloke once..."

"Yeh, Bodie," someone called out. "You were a merc. What did you do out in the bush with no women?" Bodie just stared stonefaced, his guts churning and his pulse racing.

"Now, now, lads," Murphy interjected, "we all know Bodie's reputation as a ladies man."

"Hey, Murphy," another agent shouted, laugh-

ing, "what about those long stakeouts—you ever get so randy you thought you'd burst if you didn't get some relief?"

"You mean," grinned Murphy, "a quick wank with the other guy's right hand?"

"You public school lads are all the same," Jax said in mock disgust.

"Bugger off!" Murphy laughed and slapped him on the back.

"Poor choice of words, mate!"

The chatter continued, voices rising and swelling as Bodie stood there, silent and unmoving, watching Doyle's still profile. Suddenly, Doyle rose and left the room without a word or a look to Bodie. Jumping up, Bodie quickly went after him, the sound of Doyle's retreating boots echoing in the empty hallway.

He knew if he didn't get to Doyle right away, talk to him and calm him, then everything would fall apart. He knew his Ray, knew how he hid behind a cloak of righteousness and morality.

"Doyle!" he yelled as he spun around a corner. A door at the end of the corridor swung open.

"Bodie. Doyle," Cowley barked. "My office. Now." And Bodie watched helplessly as he lost all chance to quell the rising waves of fear as they were sent off on separate chores.

BEGGING OFF from the game of darts and the final round of drinks, Doyle slipped out of the noisy pub and into the blustery cold to have an early night and catch up on lost sleep. He hadn't seen Bodie since Cowley had sent them off on different errands earlier that day.

Huddled down in the warmth of bed, he was brought roughly awake by the chirruping of the telephone. Hand fumbling for the phone, the clock fell with a *thunk* to the floor. He rolled, cursing, to his side and managed to pick up the receiver. "This better be fuckin' good," he swore into the mouthpiece, instantly praying that the caller wasn't George Cowley himself. Silence and the faint hum of the wires met his ear. "Doyle here," he said, absently rubbing his nose. There was no response. Struggling to sit up in bed he added, "Hello? Who's there?" and stretched to switch on the lamp. A faint *click* and then the buzz of a disconnected line. Puzzled and angry at his broken sleep, he slammed down the receiver and began the search for the fallen clock.

Sitting in his darkened lounge, Bodie cradled

the telephone in his lap.

DOYLE SAT at the window, looking out at the rain-grey street as a few brave, damp souls skittered toward destinations unknown, bodies and umbrellas bent into the streaming wet. His mood was as grey as the street.

A familiar car pulled to the curb across the street and a familiar figure dislodged itself and plunged into the rain and traffic. A disgruntled horn honked as the figure dodged a path across the road and up the steps to the small shelter of the portico.

The bell rang and Doyle buzzed him in. A minute or two later, a somewhat damp looking Bodie meandered in looking smugly like the cat who had eaten the bird. “Lo, mate,” he grinned, reaching a hand out to stroke a shoulder that, like a cat, suddenly wasn’t there.

“Ere, watch you don’t drip all over the carpet,” Doyle said sullenly, sidestepping Bodie and quickly ushering him on through to the kitchen. “Drip on the lino. At least I can mop up in here.”

Raising a cynical brow, Bodie said sarcastically, “How domestic of you,” then to lessen the harshness, smiled sweetly and wrapped two soggy arms around Doyle, pulling him into a hard embrace.

“Oi! You’re getting me all wet.” Doyle twisted violently. “Leave off,” he complained, finally pulling away. Bodie eyed him uneasily as Doyle maneuvered his way around to the opposite end of the table, quite out of Bodie’s reach.

“S’up, Doyle?” he asked, an edge creeping into his voice.

“What do you mean, what’s up?” Doyle almost shouted. “You bloody well know what’s going on.”

“The sweep,” Bodie muttered, eyes narrowing. He felt his guts begin to tighten, his jaw clenching as he stared unblinking at Doyle.

“Yeh, the fucking sweep.”

“What’s your point, Ray?” He leaned back against the countertop and folded his arms across his chest, knowing the worst was coming yet unable to stop it in its full-tilt rush towards them.

“*My point*, you fucking moron,” Doyle enunciated clearly, “is that *nothing ever happened*. We never did anything.”

“*What?*” Bodie rumbled as Doyle flinched. “It didn’t seem like *nothing* when you were bent over and begging for more!” He leaned angrily over the small table, hands balled into tight fists, and glared at Doyle. “It didn’t seem like *nothing* when you

were stickin’ yer prick up me arse!” he roiled, slamming a fist down on the hard wood of the table, rattling cups and spoons.

“Dammit, Bodie! We could lose our fucking jobs! We could get blacklisted. And over what? A quick fuck or two?”

Silence filled the space between them. A quick fuck or two? A prickly chill ran through Bodie. “C’mon, Doyle. No one’s goin’ to find us out,” Bodie said in a quiet voice.

“Jesus, Bodie.” Doyle was aghast. “It only took a low-level sweep to find out Humphries! Cowley’ll authorize a full blown sweep now. They’ll be looking for *anything*.”

“And they won’t find anything. It’s between us.”

“You’re stupider than you look. They’ll find it if they look hard enough. We’re prime blackmail material and what could be better than a couple of agents in your pocket?” He rubbed his eyes with the back of his hand.

“But nobody but us will know.” Bodie felt a wave of nausea rise and grow inside him.

“Why are you being so bloody-minded about this, Bodie?” Doyle asked. “It’s not like it meant anything.”

All air whooshed out of Bodie’s lungs as if he’d been hit. Didn’t *mean* anything?

He felt dizzy, thought he might topple right there. He gripped the back of the chair. In a crippling flash, Bodie saw his life illuminated, all the disappointments, all the betrayals, all the leavings. Doyle was just one more in a long succession of people walking away from him. All the years and what did he have?

He thought of all the books on his shelves he’d never had time to read. Gathering dust. And all the places in the world he’d never been to see. Maps in his head. And all the things he’d never had the guts to say to Doyle. Stuck in his throat. The paths not taken, all because of the fear of disappointment. And here he was faced with Doyle’s indifference instead.

Uneasy in Bodie’s silence, Doyle went on. “Cowley doesn’t like to get caught with his knickers down, especially when it’s his agents’ knickers.” He paused. “It’s not like it meant anything.”

“No.” Bodie felt hollow inside. He desperately wanted a cigarette. He hadn’t smoked since joining CI5 but he needed one now. He needed to feel the burning as he pulled the fetid smoke down into his lungs, the sickening rush of the

nicotine as it hit his bloodstream.

"It was just sex, Bodie." Doyle cocked his head and gave Bodie a funny look. He made a nervous little laugh. The expression on Bodie's face remained unwavering. "It wasn't any more than sex, was it?"

"What if I said it was?" Bodie asked. "Would it make a difference?"

Doyle stared at him a moment. "No." He leaned back against the cooker, hands thrust in his jeans pockets. "It wouldn't." The refrigerator motor cycled on, a low droning filling the small kitchen. "Nothing ever happened, Bodie," he said staring into Bodie's eyes. "Nothing." Then he walked out of the room.

Bodie watched Doyle's retreating back, the finality setting in.

Images raced and flickered through his mind. His da, face drawn and grey, shouting at him, telling him he was stupid and inept, diminishing the small child until he found solace in the hard facade of indifference. The nights, staring into the dark as he listened to his mum weep and his da rage about how stupid they were, how she and the boy were a drain and a waste. He would curl into a ball and rock back and forth, eyes squeezed shut, when his da would come home late and drunk and smack his mum about. The sound of glass tinkling as she fell back against the little table in the corner where she kept her tiny collection of souvenirs from their family trips to New Brighton and Blackpool, little treasures of colored glass and ceramic. The back of his father as he slammed out of the rundown flat into the chill afternoon, leaving the young Bodie standing alone and shivering on the step, fists jammed deep into his pockets.

Not good enough. He and Mum hadn't been good enough for his da. And now Doyle was coldly saying he wasn't good enough for him, too.

He shut his eyes, trying to black out the memories, then, gathering himself together, let himself out of the silent flat.

BODIE PUT the car in gear, released the brake and pulled away from the curb before his partner had time to settle himself in and slam shut the door. "Hey, what's your problem?" he grouched at Bodie who just stared unhappily at the road. Doyle sighed and propped a foot on the dash.

Doyle would leave him. He'd told him so.

They were headed for a street in east London.

Cowley had sent them to pick up Rawlin, a small-time drug dealer with possible information in a corruption case. His last known address was a crumbling walk-up in an area set to be razed to put up more ugly council flats.

Leave him alone and bereft and aching. Bodie wasn't sure he could survive.

He drove automatically, mind slipping and colliding like bumper cars with thoughts of Doyle: Doyle underneath him in bed, heaving and thrashing as Bodie brought him closer and closer to the edge; the image of him in the restroom, back rigid when news of the security sweep had uncovered Humphries' treachery; the look of casual indifference on his face when he'd told Bodie they'd be safer not sleeping together.

They pulled up just down the street from a dilapidated row of buildings. Getting out of the car, Doyle looked up at the overcast sky, muttered, "Bloody weather," and slammed the car door.

Bodie covered the front, strolling up to press the buzzer while Doyle sidled round the back. There was a burp of static from the speaker as Bodie leaned in to speak. "Yes, hullo there," he drawled. "I'm from the council. Is a Mr. Rawlin there?" A curtain twitched inside and a door banged.

He heard Doyle's muffled yell and the thud of footsteps running. Tracking the sound, he took off in their direction, ending up at a deserted building site, rubbish and pieces of pipe scattered among piles of bricks and lumber. He weaved his way through scaffolding, finally spotting Doyle off to his left.

A shot sounded, ricocheting off some metal sheeting. It was hard to tell where it came from. Sounds mixed with traffic and bounced off machinery, masonry and half-built walls.

Gun in hand, he edged his way towards Doyle. Hunkered down behind a clutter of buckets and boards, Doyle silently signalled Rawlin's location. Another shot fired and Bodie quickly joined Doyle in his temporary shelter.

"The little fucker's got us located," Doyle whispered. Cautiously, he peered around the rubble only to pull back instantly as more shots echoed through the site. "C'mon, Rawlin!" Doyle yelled out. "We just came to talk. Put the gun away now."

He was answered by a quick volley of gunfire. Sighing, Doyle looked at Bodie who raised an eyebrow in response. Instinctively reading each

other, Doyle balanced on the balls of his feet then took off running while Bodie let loose a hail of bullets. Bodie watched as Doyle zigzagged a path off to the side. Stupid bugger, he thought to himself. He's not staying down. Rawlin'll spot him in an instant. Get himself killed, he will.

The idea erupted into his brain, as swiftly and dangerously as a bullet. Fear gripped him. And a certainty. He squeezed his eyes shut for a moment, trying to ignore it, to focus wholly on his surroundings. He moved quickly, diving for a cover that was closer to where Rawlin was. But he couldn't let it go. Like a siren's song luring him ever closer to treacherous waters, the idea beckoned him, her deadly rocks hidden beneath the crashing waves, ready to drown him with her sensuous promises of fidelity and eternity.

Another shot echoed. The bloody bastard's moved, Bodie realized, mentally tracking where the shot had come from. He caught a whisper of movement and knew it to be Doyle circling around.

It was so simple. That was all he had to do. Just drop his vigilance slightly, be just a split second too slow in covering Ray's back, be just that tiny bit derelict and Ray would buy it. He would die here in Bodie's arms and no one would be the wiser. The thought tripped through his mind. *A little death without mourning. No call and no warning. No recriminations, no board of inquiry, no questions. After all, who was to say he wasn't doing his duty? No witnesses, no one to tell. A dangerous idea that almost makes sense.*

And Ray would die. The pain of the thought cut through him like a knife. But Ray would die and Bodie would have him forever. No one would know. *All the secrets and no one to tell.* Ray would be locked forever inside him, his to keep, to cherish, to hold onto until he himself died. The pain of that was nothing compared to the pain of watching Ray walk away, of telling Bodie he wasn't good enough.

Not good enough. Wasn't good enough for Da either. And Da had walked away from him, too, just like Doyle was. He leaned against an unfinished wall, panting. The roughness of the brick cut through his jacket into his back.

He could even do it himself, he thought numbly. No one would know, he kept repeating, no one would know. *Cold steel, fingers too numb to feel. A shot gone awry. Squeeze the handle, blow out the candle.* He could do it and keep the secret buried deep inside him, along with all the treacherous and

hidden demons perched like vultures around his soul, waiting patiently to devour him some dark and unforgiving night.

He caught sight of Doyle again. He crouched down suddenly and Bodie could see that he was listening intently, divining Rawlin's whereabouts before he took another step. Sixth sense he has, Bodie thought. Always knows when there's someone about.

And Ray would never know of his betrayal, would die believing in Bodie, innocent in his faith that his partner would be guarding his back, protecting him with his life. Only Bodie would know and he would never share that betrayal. He would hold it close inside his heart, knowing he would always have Doyle and could rewrite those last few days, mentally erase the argument and the parting and the pain. He could hold Doyle close forever.

Doyle was moving again. Bodie could see him carefully picking his way. The ground was slippery with puddles and mud. A slight movement of color close by caught his eye and he then knew where Rawlin was. And if Bodie could see Doyle then so could... Rawlin rose from behind a nearby piece of machinery, gun aimed unerringly on an unknowing Doyle.

He imagined he could actually see the bullet spinning toward Doyle in slow motion, hear the muted "rrrrr" as it sliced the air in its unwavering path towards Doyle's heart. He saw Doyle turn and catch sight of him staring, frozen. He looked puzzled.

Images filled his brain: Doyle lying bleeding, face white and drawn: Doyle, still as death, tubes stuffed down his nose, body grey and cold as granite: doctors hovering like white wraiths, trying to repair the gaping holes in Doyle's body. His heart thudded in his chest, he could barely breathe, his throat was dry. *NO!* he screamed silently.

Bodie yelled, "DOYLE!" and his partner spun, moving off to the side slightly, grunting as he fell against the bricks. The bullet burned a narrow path across his arm.

"Shit." Bodie hissed. "Doyle!" he yelled, dodging his way through crates and debris, finally bending down next to Doyle. "You all right?" he panted, all the time thinking oh my god, oh my god, oh my god.

The pain must have been excruciating; Doyle's eyes teared behind their closed lids, tiny droplets of

liquid squeezing out and trickling down the sides of his cheeks, leaving bright smears in the dust and grime covering him. He moaned and grasped his arm, and through gritted teeth let slip a “Yeh.” Lifting his hand from the wound he stared at the blood, adding, “Just a crease.” Bodie flinched. “Hurts like all fuck, though.” Doyle’s breathing was heavy. “Be okay in a minute.” He pushed his hair off his face with the back of the bloodied hand.

Bodie took it all in with a tremendous sense of relief, of disappointment, of fear and of guilt. A shot pinged off the pile of bricks they hunkered behind and he leaned around it, getting off several rounds. Sweating, he popped the empty clip from his gun and jammed in a fresh one. Still shooting, he could only look at Doyle in quick glimpses, not daring to let the rest of his attention wander, lest the nightmare begin again. With the will of survival Doyle scrambled for his dropped gun. But it was too late. In a burst of confused retribution, trying to redeem his guilty self from damnation, Bodie went dashing out into the open, drawing Rawlin’s fire. As the gunman moved to shoot, Bodie’s trained soldier’s instincts found his target and drove home the final, killing shot. Rawlin cried out in surprise and then fell. He lay sprawled in the mud and a seeping pool of blood.

Trembling, his whole body gave in to the shock and the adrenalin, breaths coming in short, rapid bursts. He felt like exploding. Damn. Doyle would know. He would take one look at Bodie and read the betrayal in his eyes. He tried to keep his hands steady as he reholstered his gun. He turned his back on Doyle, trying to hide his shame behind a blank facade, trying to return his breathing to normal.

Doyle toed Rawlin’s body with his grimy trainers, scowling. Bodie closed his eyes and tried desperately to regain control of himself. After all, he sighed, he hadn’t done it, he hadn’t let his vigilance slip, hadn’t let his darker side take control and kill his partner. God. His breathing began to slow. He had come so close. He ran a hand back through his already ruffled hair. But he hadn’t done it. He hadn’t let Ray die. He mentally chanted, like a mantra, over and over, penance for his guilt, as he stood back and watched Doyle calling in on his RT. I didn’t do it. Doyle’s not dead.

Pocketing the RT, Doyle turned his angry glare at Bodie. “What the hell happened back there?” Doyle stormed at him, cradling his bleeding arm

with the other. “What the fuck were you doing? I could’ve been *killed!*”

Bodie looked at him, swallowing the dirty truth, burying it deep amid the useless refuse of his soul. About to open his mouth with nothing to say, Doyle’s unflinching gaze penetrated and caught a quick flash of the drowning honesty and knew. Knew without doubt down to his toes. Doyle’s eyes opened wide in astonishment, and horror mingled with dawning understanding. He took a step back and in the action Bodie knew that he was lost, knew that Doyle knew.

As truth bubbled around them, blackness and misery filled Bodie, suffusing through his pores, murdering all hope of redemption. He went deaf, dumb and blind. All he comprehended was the certainty of Doyle standing in mute understanding, sharing the awful knowledge. The ruins of his life loomed ahead like a deep, black canyon waiting to swallow him into the abyss. Everything he had worked for, everything he had ever wanted was slipping quietly away. Everything...was lost.

And then Doyle looked away, his face settling into a blank, and with utter amazement Bodie watched as all the anger and sense of betrayal percolated into the ground. With a flash of horror he suddenly understood.

Doyle knew and would use it against Bodie. He would hold the knowledge above Bodie, flaunt it, use it, weave it into a dark threat. *Thread is ripping, the knot is slipping.* He knew what Bodie was and that comprehension gave him power, infinite and baroque. It was the vilest of secrets and the most viselike of holds. Doyle would flog him with it, drub him into endless submission, bind him with fealty. Oh, Doyle was a fine piece of work and now, the devil incarnate, he owned Bodie. *All the secrets and no one to tell.*

Worlds passed between them. Contracts were signed, souls were bound and Bodie was cast upon a sea of misery. They stood like that, feet rooted in the concrete, staring, not moving as the whine of sirens and screeching tires came tumbling upon them.

RETURNING FROM Casualty with a somber and bandaged Doyle, Bodie pulled up outside Doyle’s flat, letting the motor idle. Silence was like a blanket between them. Doyle reached for the door handle. “See you in the morning, then?” Bodie asked, voice thick with uncertainty.

Doyle turned to look at him, expression giving

nothing away. Bodie stared straight out the windscreen, hand tightly gripping the wheel. "Yeah, tomorrow," Doyle replied and he opened the door and slid out.

He watched as Doyle walked away, the world and all its terrible sadness settling heavily on him. From the car he sat staring at the retreating figure in the twilight, envisioning all he had lost, all the wonders and joys and irritations of Ray Doyle that would never be his. Wiping one hand wearily across his eyes, he gunned the engine and pulled into traffic with a small screech of tires.

He knew where to go and it wasn't Soho, with all its glittering decadence. Soho was for teenagers and tourists. Bodie was neither and when his desire arose, when the need was urgent and unforgiving, he knew where to head to slake this need: the dark streets full of hard men and promise, where the night was a cloak of anonymity, and pleasure was like ripe tomatoes ready to be plucked.

Pounding into pliant flesh, one hand gripped bruisingly on a narrow hip, the other fist on pulsing cock, Bodie let himself drown in the blackness of sex. He'd found a willing body to fuck, one that would ask no questions and carry no guilt. The man had silently hustled Bodie into a dank and smelly alleyway, dropping quickly to his knees to undo the zip on Bodie's trousers and engulf his already hardening cock in the dark warmth of mouth. Bodie had moaned his pleasure, hands entwined in the man's hair, and then, when it seemed he could take no more, he dragged the man to unsteady feet and pushed him up against a rough wall. Not waiting to be asked, the man undid his trousers and half bent, legs spread, palms pressed to the wall, offering himself up to the dangerous, smouldering man. Bodie carefully pressed his saliva-slick cock into the tight ring of muscle, easily pushing through into the tight channel. He grunted. Rocking back and forth, Bodie willingly let himself surrender to the sensations, forcing coherent thought into the cold night. His breath escaped in wispy puffs of white. The wet slap of his balls against the man's bare arse was muffled by the sounds of traffic just a few meters away. He came with a muffled whimper and when the man had finally pulled his trousers back up and left the alley, Bodie leaned blindly against the wall, alone and once again filled with overwhelming misery.

THEY SPENT most of Monday morning work-

ing up reports and filling in forms, drowning in the morass of paperwork that followed the end of any op, especially ones with casualties. Stuck in a small office together, what little conversation they shared was strained and brief, the close quarters feeling hot and claustrophobic. The quiet scratching of pen, the rustle of papers turning and the muted sounds of conversations in the corridor were giving Bodie a headache, the back of his skull pounding at him like the rhythm of the heart still beating in Doyle's chest. Bodie was consumed, his mind replaying every minute of yesterday, watching over and over those horrible moments of dawning horror as Doyle had realized what Bodie had almost done. He could see Doyle's face, eyes wide in anger and disbelief, see the smudged grime on his face, the light filtering through the dark curls, backlighting him with a halo of luminance as sweat beaded with blood on his creased brow.

The chair screeched against the floor as Doyle pushed it back and rose, interrupting Bodie's nightmare. He turned and left the crowded office without a word. Bodie sat staring at the empty chair.

By late afternoon the rain had finally cleared; a wan sun hovered low in the sky but cast no shadows. Bodie watched as Doyle walked out to the car park with Murphy, occasional chuckles punctuating the heavy sounds of traffic. Parting at Murphy's motor, Doyle ambled on towards his own, jangling his keys in rhythm to his steps. Sixth sense prickling, he turned to see Bodie a few meters behind and stopped, patient as a cat in wait. Bodie did not want to talk to Doyle, had been carefully avoiding him all afternoon, his conscience not quite smoothed over enough to face the situation, his own self-created hell. But Doyle was not to be avoided.

"Bodie!" Doyle called, legs apart, uninjured hand on hip, all casual grace and indifference. The cant of his hips was a lure, drawing Bodie, beckoning him. Bodie closed his eyes briefly, the pain of knowledge arrowing through him to rest achingly in his chest. "Listen, mate," Doyle continued, eyes gleaming. "I've been thinking." He gave the keys a little toss, catching them in his palm. "You were right. Nobody needs to know. It can be just between us."

Bodie's breath hissed out; he was rooted to the spot. Doyle's hair ruffled gently in the breeze and he caught a whiff of stale sweat. Then Doyle gave

him a look that pierced him to his core. A look that knew the unspeakable. He shuddered and cursed. Cursed Chelten for getting killed, cursed Humphries for getting caught, cursed Rawlin for not killing Doyle. But mostly he cursed himself for allowing Doyle to own him.

Doyle stepped over to Bodie, grabbed the collar of his jacket and pulled him close. "You want it don't you, Bodie?" he whispered. "You want to get down on your knees and suck me off, don't you."

Bodie looked at him, pleading in his eyes. He licked his dry lips. A nasty little smile crossed Doyle's features. "*I know what you are,*" Doyle breathed, almost inaudibly. It was unbearable. "Get in the car," he ordered, letting go of Bodie and unlocking the door, slipping in behind the wheel.

And Bodie went like a lamb to the slaughter, despite the risk of being seen, of getting caught at what had bitterly driven them apart, for he was bound irrevocably to Doyle and his whims. His pulse raced as he walked to the other side of the car and opened the door. Sliding in next to Doyle, he entered a private world. With the doors closed to the cold and noise, and darkness settling rapidly around them, they were wrapped in a close, timeless world.

Long moments passed. Then, shifting back so that his hips and groin were upthrust, Doyle tersely ordered, "Undo the zip." Bodie obeyed, unbuttoning the jeans and slowly drawing down the zip. "Now, pull it out."

Again, Bodie did as he was told, pushing aside Doyle's shirt and gently slipping the half-hard cock from the confines of soft cotton, fondling it, pulling it, drawing it out to its full, shuddering length. "Ray..." he began.

"Don't say anything!" Doyle snapped. "Just do what I tell you." Bodie met his eyes and saw the determination there. "Now suck me," he hissed.

Bodie bent over in the seat until his face was inches from the dark patch of Doyle's groin. Carefully, he took the hard cock in his mouth, savoured the sour flavor and smooth texture, felt the pulse of blood in the long vein. He lavished the cock with his tongue, tormented it with his teeth and nurtured it with his lips. His left hand reached

down to cosset Doyle's balls, rolling them between thumb and fingers, saliva from his sucking dripping down to soothe the friction.

"That's it, Bodie," Doyle whispered into the darkness. "Yeh, let me fuck your mouth," and his hips thrust upwards, forcing his cock deeper into the suckling mouth. His breath grew harsh and from his lips rolled a litany of curses, of harsh encouragements, of obscenities. With one hand gripping the door armrest, the other clenched at his side, Doyle never touched Bodie.

Bodie's back ached. He was arched over sideways in the small car, one leg pulled up halfway under him on the seat. His own cock was hard, his balls tied in knots as his mouth worked and his mind raced. He was terrified. He knew that this was just the beginning, that this was only a taste of what was to come from Doyle. Doyle owned him, totally and without parole.

Doyle's hips were rocking, plunging his cock in and out of Bodie's mouth. The hardness of the shaft, the unrelenting pounding of it against his throat, began to overwhelm Bodie. He thought he might suffocate, as much from the unyielding drive of Doyle's sybaritism as from the unexpected treasure of tasting and holding Doyle again.

After what seemed an endless succession of sucking and licking, of supplication and atonement, Doyle came with a shudder and a muffled moan, one hand fisted against his lips. Bodie stayed bowed, his cheek resting on Doyle's damp belly, the pungent scent of cum filling the confined space. Gradually, their breathing slowed, came to normal. Doyle's cock rested limply in a shadow of pubic hair.

Urged by Doyle's stirring, Bodie lifted his head and straightened, wiping dried semen from his lips with the back of his hand. They sat in the dark, staring out the windscreen. Bodie could hear the rustle of fabric and the scrape of the zip. *In a parked car in a crowded street, you see your love made complete.*

"Don't say anything," Doyle grated. "Just get out."

The car door slammed shut, echoing in the car park. The engine roared and Doyle pulled away, leaving Bodie standing in a cloud of exhaust.

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