

*A Sip...*



*A Torquere Press Short*

***Windows and Walls, Inches of Trust 4***  
***By A.R. Moler***

“Would you like me to hold it up while you screw?” asked Brian Townsend.

Tristan looked up at him, mouth hanging open, cordless screwdriver in one hand. “I can’t believe you just said that. On second thought, it is *you* I’m talking about. Were you referring to the piece of trim or did you have something else in mind?” Tristan was sitting on the floor of the round den of his Victorian brownstone, trying to brace a knee and an elbow against the piece of wooden trim he was replacing.

Brian let his eyes roam down the length of Tristan's body, thoroughly appreciating the hip hugging jeans with the blown-out knee worn by his lover. He seldom saw Tristan, who was a homicide detective, dressed so casually. "I was actually referring to the trim, but I can think of other things, too," said Brian teasingly.

The window of Tristan's house had gotten broken by an errant street hockey ball several weeks ago and a certain amount of water damage had occurred to the window frame and wall despite Tristan's attempt to seal out the weather with plastic and duct tape. Brian's career as an architect gave him contacts with companies that specialized in vintage-style replacement glass and he had helped Tristan arrange for that part of the repair a number of days ago.

"I could do with an extra hand," said Tristan.

Brian knelt down beside him and waggled his fingers in Tristan's general direction. "Where would you like me to put it?" Brian asked.

Tristan pressed his lips together, an apparent effort to suppress laughter. "For now, right in the middle of the curve, so it stops popping away from the wall."

Brian let out an overly dramatic sigh and put his hand where indicated. "How many key cuts did you put in it?"

"Key cuts?"

"The little halfway through the thickness cuts so it'll actually fit the curve of the wall..." replied Brian.

"I thought they were called kerfs, and I did four."

"Kerfs are for convex curves, keys are for concave. Your wall is concave."

"Thank you for the freaking geometry lesson. Did you volunteer to help just so you could point out how badly I'm fucking this up?" Tristan rolled his eyes.

"I volunteered so you *wouldn't* have to rip it apart and do it again," Brian replied. "The curve of the wall is pretty shallow, but I don't know if four is enough."

"Okay, well, I still need to get it fastened to the wall in at least a couple places so I can tell if it's going to work okay, right?"

"Yeah, probably," Brian agreed, still a little dubious about the plan.

"Screw, please," Tristan said, holding out his hand.

"You or the board?" said Brian. It was too irresistible a straight line. Tristan groaned.

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It turned out that, no, four cuts weren't enough. Tristan gave up and decided to attack it again on another day. Brian followed Tristan into the kitchen. It was an eclectic mix of vintage and modern.

"So are we going to Alicia's Christmas bash on Friday? Or do you have to work?" asked Brian.

"I have to go to a retirement reception in the afternoon, but otherwise I'm off, by some weird luck of the draw."

"You don't sound very enthused by the idea."

"I have mixed feelings about that sort of thing. I need a life outside my job, but I always end up wandering around feeling like a moron because I only know a few people."

"Hey it's where we met, and I did say 'we' ya know. I thought, well hoped, we'd go together..." Brian suddenly hesitated. They'd gone to a beer tasting and out to lunch. Despite the fact they'd eventually ended up involved in some fairly intense sex, by all appearances, the general public probably thought they were just two friends hanging out. Brian didn't broadcast the fact he was gay, but it wasn't a deep dark secret either. Brian suddenly wasn't sure how in the closet Tristan was with regards to the rest of his life. Getting straight answers from the detective about his personal life practically required thumbscrews and threats of torture. "Tristan, are you okay with being seen with me? I don't want to put your job in danger."

Tristan reached out and hooked a finger in Brian's belt loop, drawing him close. "Being seen with you is just fine," he said softly. His hands clasped Brian's head and pulled him into a long, deep kiss.

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Brian glanced at his watch. Six thirty. Tristan had said he would pick Brian up from work and they'd go grab some dinner before Alicia's party. The plan had been for five thirty, but Tristan had called and said he was running horribly late due to the reception thing. The detective had promised to be there by six thirty. Brian's phone rang.

"Hey, I'm in the parking lot," said Tristan.

"On my way," replied Brian and headed out to meet him.

As Brian slid into the car he was surprised to see Tristan in his full dress blues. He supposed his surprise must have showed because Tristan immediately offered up an explanation.

"I got stuck at the retirement thing for the Captain. I didn't have time to change before I got here, but I do have some civvies in the back seat," said Tristan.

“Oh, can I help you change?” asked Brian. God, if Brian had thought the man was hot dressed as Zorro way back at Halloween, seeing Tristan in his uniform was even better.

Tristan gave him a raised eyebrow. “You have a uniform fetish?” Tristan asked.

“Only if there’s a gorgeous guy inside it,” teased Brian.

Tristan rolled his eyes and turned the car out onto the street.

At a stoplight, Brian reached across and rubbed his hand against Tristan’s crotch.

“Jesus, Brian, don’t do that while I’m driving,” snapped Tristan.

“You’re not driving. We’re at a stoplight.” This was just too irresistible. Not to mention the thought of peeling Tristan out of that uniform was amazingly hot. Just thinking about the man beside him, half-in half-out of that uniform...

At the next stoplight, Brian grabbed Tristan’s hand and pulled it over to lie against his own crotch. He was pretty sure Tristan could feel the hard bulge beneath his fly. Tristan gave him a long, curious look.

“I should have known after our little encounter in the shed, you have a thing for risk,” commented Tristan.

“Mmm. Please, Mr. Policeman, can you arrest me? I’ve been very bad. I think I need to be strip-searched. I have a concealed weapon, too,” taunted Brian.

“I’m... familiar with that weapon,” Tristan said and swallowed hard.

Brian let Tristan pull his hand away as the light turned green. “I could take it out and show it to you,” offered Brian.

Tristan mimed banging his head against the steering wheel. “You’re making me crazy.”

“I was kind of shooting for hard.”

“Fuck. That, too.” Pulling into the parking lot of the restaurant, Tristan parked his car in the poorly lit back corner. “Out of the car, I think it’s time to frisk you.”

Now it was Brian’s turn to be a little surprised. He got out and Tristan came around to the passenger side. “Assume the position,” said Tristan softly. “Hands on the roof.” Brian complied. Tristan’s hands ran down Brian’s sides. It was a slow gliding pressure that moved from his ribs to his chest and then paused momentarily at his hips. “About that weapon...”

“In the front, a little to the left,” supplied Brian, wondering just how far this was going to go. Tristan’s hands slid around Brian’s hips and rubbed down across his cock. Brian sucked in a breath as strong fingers cupped, squeezed, and kneaded. Oh. God. It didn’t matter that the parking lot was freezing cold or that somebody could interrupt them at any second. Tristan’s body was a warmth against his back, and one arm circled Brian’s chest, holding him steady.

“Nice weapon. Is it likely to go off?” Tristan taunted, his voice husky.

Brian had to concentrate to get an answer out. “Unh... yeah... any minute.” How the hell did he manage to get himself into these situations? Tristan’s fingers were stroking him through his slacks, and Brian leaned into the pressure, pinning Tristan’s hand between his crotch and the car door. This was insane. This was... too late. It was pulsing warmth and that surge of pure ecstasy that came with release. Brian sagged against the car, wondering just how embarrassed he should be by having a fuse that short, not to mention he’d just blown his wad in his shorts like a freaking teenager.

Behind him Tristan chuckled and said, “Guess I got you really wound up.” The man stole a quick, hard kiss and walked back around the car to pull out a garment bag. “I’ll see you inside,” he said softly and headed toward the restaurant.

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Tristan had chosen the restaurant based on the fact they advertised “traditional British food.” Brian noted that the place seemed better than most at approximating the food found in the average pub, and he ought to know, having grown up with British immigrant parents. Tristan was quietly pleased that his choice had been good.

“So are you working on Christmas day, or do you have family obligations?” asked Brian. Tristan looked up from his bowl of Guinness stew. He noticed Brian’s choice of words. He found it interesting that a man who could come up with some of the worst innuendos and puns he’d ever heard, was sometimes equally specific with his questions.

“I’m working,” Tristan replied.

“Is that by chance or by choice?”

“Choice.” Very, very much by choice. It wouldn’t earn him any points with his family, but he’d rather deal with bitter deprecating comments before and after about how inferior his job was than a day of obligatory misery. He really felt he owed Brian something in the way of an explanation. The guy was sweet and funny and actually seemed to give a damn about him. “I, um, it’s a toss up which bit my family thinks is worse, the part about me being a cop or the part that I’m gay. Truthfully, it’d be easier if they disowned me.”

“Ouch,” Brian replied. “I don’t always see eye to eye with my family, but it’s more to do with me choosing to live here in the city than anything else. I’m having dinner on Christmas day with

a few friends at Kevin and Diane's, I'm sure they wouldn't mind an extra warm body if you want to drop by whenever you get off work."

"That's sounds sort of awkward," said Tristan.

"Actually, I'm a serious third wheel. I'm the only one who's coming alone." Brian reached out and brushed his fingers along Tristan's hand where it lay on the table.

Alone was one of those words that brought a whole host of emotions with it. Here he was eating dinner, not alone, purposely with someone he was attracted to and not just some work colleague. Here was someone who seemed to be actively seeking some sort of involvement with him. Was it just the sex, or was it leading somewhere? And did Tristan want to risk the devastation that his last relationship had left in its wake?

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Brian lifted his hand from where it lay touching Tristan's and tipped his friend's face up.

"Will you think about it, please?" he asked. "Family crap aside, I'd like to think you'll get to see at least one person on Christmas day who's happy to see you. You have almost three weeks to decide, and it can be a last minute thing." Brian wasn't sure what he read in Tristan's expression. It might have been longing, or it might have been uncertainty. He decided he'd better simply leave the invitation open and see what came to pass. "In the meantime, are we going to Alicia's party? Or should we head back to my place and see what else we can find to do with your uniform?"

That drew a smile from Tristan. "I think we should hit the party before we get ourselves into any more trouble," Tristan replied.

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"Oh, God, I'm finally done re-tiling that bathroom. I swear it took weeks!" said a woman named Cassandra. "I have to admit I love it, though. I thought the rectangular tiles would look stupid, but they really tend toward making the room look tall." She made a hand gesture with a cookie.

"I told you that you needed something other than just square tiles in a space that small," said Brian. He glanced at Tristan standing off to his left. Alicia's Christmas "do" was in full swing and the house was crowded with people drinking, stuffing their faces, and chatting. Tristan had talked to the few people he knew, but mostly he just hung out, watching. Brian wondered if Tristan was uncomfortable. He made an excuse to Cassandra and headed toward Tristan.

"Is there anyone you don't know?" Tristan asked.

"Some. Why?" asked Brian.

“You seem to know something about almost everybody you talk to. Maybe I ought to hire you to help me out with some of my cases,” said Tristan.

“Oh, I’m sure that’d go over well. Are you okay? You look... I don’t know, tired?” said Brian.

“I guess I’m just socialized out. After spending half my day playing nice-nice and being all totally PC with the brass from work, I’m kind of out of small talk.”

“We didn’t really have to come.”

“Yeah, we did. You enjoy this kind of thing and I said I’d come with you.” Tristan’s hands were shoved in his pockets as he leaned against the wall. He reached out and laid a hand against Brian’s hip, hooking a thumb through the belt loop. Brian smiled a little at the touch. All evening, whenever they got close, Tristan made small physical contacts. A hand on Brian’s back, a brush of fingers, a hip pressed against his own; it reminded Brian of a cat seeking warmth and he returned the touches, enjoying the feeling that Tristan wanted him close.

Brian covered the hand at his hip with his own. “We’ve been here a couple hours. It’s okay if you want to bail. Let me say goodbye to Alicia and we can leave,” he said.

Tristan nodded.

It took a couple of minutes to find Alicia. “Great party, but we really need to go,” said Brian, giving her a hug.

“I’m glad you could make it. I see you finally tracked down your Zorro,” she replied, referring to the minor hitch at the Halloween party where Brian had nearly failed to learn the name of the man who had come as Zorro. “I’ll give you all the gory details of the rest of the party on Monday.” Judging from the look she gave him, Brian suspected he was also going to get grilled about coming to this party *with* Tristan, this time.

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As Tristan pulled up in front of Brian’s apartment building, Brian was busy having an internal debate. He desperately wanted to invite the man to spend the night. It wasn’t like they hadn’t managed to get up to some pretty intense things during day and evening hours, it was the principle of the thing. If you spent the night with someone, there was the possibility that things were moving in a more serious direction, or maybe that was just his own twisted form of logic. Tristan was so hard to figure out. Somewhere there was a back story to this man; Brian just knew it involved deeper hurts than working a real bitch of a job and having a non-supportive family.

“You look beat,” said Brian. “You don’t really have to go home, you know. You could crash with me. I hate to think of you driving all the way back to your place this late.” There. The offer was on the table.

Tristan put a hand on Brian’s leg. “I’d like that,” he said.

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In the bedroom, Brian flipped on the lamp on the night stand. Tristan was sort of hovering near the door, looking vaguely hesitant. Brian wasn't sure why. He crossed to where Tristan was standing.

"Do you want to go to sleep or have a beer or what?" Brian asked. He curled a hand around the back of Tristan's neck and drew him into a kiss. It was long and smoldering and somehow needy. Brian was walked backward to the bed and pushed down on it. Tristan knelt over top of him, straddling Brian's hips.

"What I want is you," Tristan whispered. He dragged his thumb across Brian's lower lip. "I've been in agony ever since the parking lot."

"We could do something about that."

Tristan's mouth quirked in a half smile. "I was kind of hoping you'd say that." He dipped his head to steal a kiss from Brian. Tristan sank lower to lie stretched out on top of Brian, and nipped softly down the side of his neck. Brian could feel the stiff length of his lover's arousal pressed close to his own cock.

Brian cupped both hands around Tristan's ass, fingers digging into firm muscles. Tristan groaned a little, and Brian hooked a leg around Tristan's and fisted a hand in the hair at the back of his head, pulling Tristan down tighter. Mouths all but sealed together, they kissed and squirmed and groped for a long time.

Eventually Brian rolled, pinning Tristan beneath him. He was intent on payback for Tristan "frisking" him earlier in the evening. Brian scooted down the length of Tristan's legs until his face was level with the hard bulge of his lover's cock. Brian closed his teeth on what lay beneath the fabric, letting the heat of his breath mix with the pressure from his mouth. Gnawing, sucking, soaking the cloth of Tristan's pants, Brian indulged in a little delightful torture.

"Oh, Jesus." Tristan gasped as he writhed on the bed and tried to wrestle open his belt. Brian caught hold of Tristan's wrist and impeded the attempt.

"Payback's a bitch, isn't it?" Brian teased. He cupped his other hand against Tristan's balls and fondled them as he returned to his attack.

Tristan moaned and bucked into the assault. "Oh fuck... gonna..." The half mumbled words ended in a sharply groaned exhalation as Brian felt the pulsing warmth flooding up against the already wet fabric.

Brian moved up and braced a hand on either side of Tristan's head and waited for him to descend from the rush. He placed a kiss on Tristan's parted lips. "You know, I'm still half stuck to my shorts after what you did earlier."

“Only half? Well, damn, now we both need to do laundry.”

“I was kind of thinking of ditching the clothes entirely at this point,” replied Brian.

Tristan’s pupils were still blown wide and his gaze up at Brian was almost drowsy. God, Tristan was just utterly gorgeous, satiated sex on a plate, er, well, on a bed anyway.

“Mmm, yeah, good plan.” They fumbled their way out of the clothes, leaving them in untidy heaps on the floor.

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Curled together under the blankets in the darkness, Brian was drifting toward sleep, one hand tracing little random patterns on the back of Tristan’s neck, as his lover’s head lay cradled on his shoulder.

“Next time we go somewhere and you want to escape, just tell me. Sometimes it takes a while for me to disengage my mouth and notice stuff like that,” murmured Brian. He wanted to reassure Tristan that he valued having just the two of them alone together as much as a good party.

“You’re like a flame. You’re warmth and light and wit, and people are attracted to you, me included,” said Tristan.

“I’m more interested in the part where you’re the one attracted. I’d like to get used to having you around on a long term basis.” Butterflies did an uncomfortable dance in Brian’s stomach. He wasn’t asking Tristan to move in or commit to some version of forever. He just wanted to feel like this was headed somewhere.

“Being involved with a cop is... problematic.” Tristan’s voice dropped to a near whisper.

“Crappy schedules, bad stress, and me worrying about you? I’m good at the worrying part.”

Tristan gave a faint snort of laughter, “Yeah, I just might believe that about you.”

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