

A Sip...



A Torquere Press Short

Police Navidad, Inches of Trust 6

By A.R. Moler

"I thought Yorkshire pudding was that stuff you pour brandy over and set on fire," said Tristan. Brian Townsend just shook his head. The cell phone in his hand was quiet for a moment. "Brian? Are you still there?"

"Yeah, I'm still here. You're thinking of a Christmas pudding. Yorkshire pudding is this kind of puffy doughy bread. My mother cooks hers in a cast iron frying pan. We usually have it with gravy on top. Christmas pudding is just plain nasty. My parents like it. I think the stuff ranks up there with fruitcake, as having better uses as a doorstop."

"So your friends, Diane and Kevin, are having a pretty traditional American Christmas dinner?"

"Unfortunately. What time do you think you'll manage to skate out of work?" Brian asked. Homicide Detective Tristan Blake was working tomorrow, a.k.a. Christmas day. He was currently on desk duty after having been pushed down a flight of subway steps by a suspect he was chasing. He had badly sprained his wrist and done some ligament damage, according to the orthopedic surgeon. It would be several weeks before it was anywhere near healed.

"Sometime after six, if I'm lucky."

"You have the address for Diane's house?" Brian asked.

"Yes."

"Good, see you there. And Tris'... police Navidad," Brian said, drawing out the enunciation.

This evoked a serious groan from Tristan. "I'll bet you've been waiting forever to use that one."

Brian laughed and responded, "Yep."

"So how're things going with you and Tristan?" prompted Diane, as Brian helped her carry dirty plates back to the kitchen.

"I'd like to say pretty well, but I still haven't decided where the whole thing is going. He had to go spend Christmas Eve with his family so I'm looking forward to seeing him tonight."

"Did you buy him anything?"

"Yeah, I bought him a nightstand. He has this gorgeous period sleigh bed and a pressboard nightstand. I hit up one of the places I know that deals with estate sale leftovers. I'm not sure if it matches the bed exactly, but I think it's a hell of a lot better looking than what he has."

"You are such a pathetic liar, Brian Townsend," said Diane with a grin.

"Huh? What'd I do?"

"One second you're claiming you don't know where your relationship with him is going. Next you're telling me you bought him furniture. You have fallen for him hard."

Brian blushed. She probably had a point. Tristan filled his thoughts. He worried about Tristan's ability to cope with only one functional hand at the moment. He wondered just how unpleasant Tristan's evening had been with his unsupportive family. Fantasies of undressing Tristan in the aforementioned bed and kissing him all over qualified as a magnificent way to end Christmas day.

Tristan was late, more than an hour late. There had been a domestic call that involved a shooting and, since they were running shorthanded due to the holiday, he had gotten drafted to help with the processing and booking. Then halfway out into the parking lot, he'd remembered the dessert that he'd had such a bitch of a time buying for Brian. It was still in the fridge back inside. Who would guess it was so difficult to find an appropriately British dessert for his lover who had grown up in the U.S. but with British-born parents?

Tristan poked the doorbell of the house with his thumb. The shopping bag holding the dessert dangled from one hand; the other arm was still in the sling under his partially buttoned coat. Despite obeying doctor's orders and avoiding use of his badly injured wrist, the thing ached like hell.

A woman opened the door. "Yes?"

"I'm Tristan Blake. I, um, was told to meet Brian Townsend here," he said.

"Oh! Yes! Come in, come in. He said you were coming by late in the day." She beckoned him inside and took his coat, departing down the hallway. The doorbell must have attracted Brian's attention, too, because he came into the foyer a few minutes later.

"Tristan! I was starting to wonder where you were," said Brian.

"I got hung up at work. So what else is new?" he replied. Brian had on a deep blue shirt and dark slacks. The blue definitely accentuated the color of Brian's eyes.

"I brought you country-appropriate dessert. The guy at the shop said it was trifle." Tristan handed over the bag. Brian gave him a quizzical look and lifted the box out. "I put it in the fridge at work. I think it's supposed to be kept cold."

"Awesome! Thank you for pudding up with me," Brian deadpanned. Tristan blinked and then groaned. Brian sat the box on the floor and threw his arms around Tristan's neck and kissed him. "Custard-iness is forgivable if you bring dessert. Otherwise I'd have to treacle you until you beg for mousse-y."

"Oh God. I set you off. I'm gonna make you beg for mercy."

"Soufflé me alive if you have to," teased Brian. Tristan settled for a good thorough grope of Brian's ass, all the while trying to avoid crushing his arm between their bodies.

Brian eased up his hold, leaving his arms still looped loosely around Tristan's neck. "I missed you," he said very softly. "I've been thinking about you the whole day." His next kiss was slow and lingering. Tristan fisted his hand gently in Brian's short, curly hair and let himself indulge in the sheer warmth of Brian's affection.

"Mmm, let's go find some bowls," murmured Brian, as he pulled away from Tristan very slowly.

Brian sat down in the corner of the sofa in Diane's living room. He spread his legs wide, and pulled Tristan down to sit between them. As his lover settled, Brian wrapped both arms around Tristan, and eased Tristan's head to his shoulder, kissing his forehead, nose and then mouth. The way Tristan almost snuggled down into the embrace made Brian curious. He knew Tristan liked to touch him, but in public the contacts were usually small. Maybe the fact that there were only a handful of people gathered in Diane's house made him feel more relaxed as conversation steered in the direction of crazy things that family members did.

"So she did the part where you boil the dough to get the bagels to rise, and then got around to the baking part. The recipe said something about misting the bagels with water so they don't get all crunchy when you bake them. And my mother grabs up the spray bottle she left on the window sill next to the plants, hosing them all down really well. Only then does she realize she's grabbed the bottle that has water mixed with bug killer and has sprayed it all over the bagels. Needless to say, she had to dump them in the trash. I guess it could have been worse -- if she hadn't noticed the goof, we all could have died of insecticide poisoning," said Brian.

Tristan chuckled a little in Brian's arms. When he spoke though, his tone was bitter. "My mother still thinks being gay is just a phase I'm going through. Last night, for Christmas Eve, she invited over a family that we've known for quite a while. They have a daughter who's a couple of years younger than me, Felicity. She's nice enough. We both somehow got roped into going to a charity event thing together last year, so my mother spent the entirety of last night dropping heavily loaded hints that Felicity and I

should hookup and go on some dates. Because *obviously* if I find the right girl, I'll decide being hetero is so much better and get married and give her grandchildren."

Brian grimaced. The sarcasm in Tristan's voice was just dripping. "Oh, Tris, I'm so sorry you had such a crappy Christmas Eve." He hugged his lover a little tighter and Tristan's free hand squeezed Brian's wrist.

"It gets funnier, though. Felicity knows I'm gay. I think we spent most of the evening rolling our eyes. She *has* a boyfriend. He's a studio musician, plays guitar as back up for rock bands. Her parents hate him," Tristan replied.

"Like I said when we all started talking about family, the people who are related to you are liable to do the most insane things," commented Diane.

Since they had arrived in separate cars, Brian followed Tristan to his brownstone at the end of the evening. There were two narrow parking places in Tristan's tiny gated backyard. Tristan leaned against his car, waiting as Brian parked.

"Just so I don't forget when you get ready to leave tomorrow, watch carefully when you back out. People come flying down the alley way too fast," Tristan said.

Brian had to smile a little at the implication that Tristan expected him to spend the night. Brian walked around to the back of his car and crooked a finger at Tristan.

"Your Christmas present is in my trunk. It's kind of too big to wrap," said Brian. Fingers crossed, he hoped Tristan would like it. Brian stuck the key in and popped the trunk. The street light in the alley cast a harsh and shadowy glow that combined with the tiny trunk light. Brian watched Tristan's face. For a moment, Tristan looked confused, then apparently the light bulb of comprehension went on, and he grinned.

"Oh wow, it's supposed to match the bed?" Tristan asked.

"I'm hoping. There's no way to tell for sure 'til I lug it upstairs, but I made my best guess."

"Is it period or repro"? I don't know crap about furniture stuff."

"It's supposed to be period, but then I'm no expert." Brian carefully lifted the nightstand out of the trunk and sat it behind the car.

"I can't really help you..." Tristan lamented, gesturing at his arm tucked in the sling.

"Not a problem. It's not really all that heavy, it's just awkward. All you really have to do to stay ahead of me and get the doors and make sure I'm not about to trip over something," replied Brian.

It took a few minutes to haul the piece up the back steps and into Tristan's kitchen. Brian eased it down as Tristan turned on the light. Brian was struck by how dead quiet and stark the room was. After the mad holiday bustle and overflowing amounts of food at Diane's house, there was something indefinably sorrowful about the lack here. It

wasn't any different than it had been a week ago when Brian had brought Tristan home after the accident and the snowstorm. It was just a kitchen, fairly neat and obviously used.

Tristan was taking off his coat. "I bought some beer last night on my way home, if you're interested. Newcastle and Hoegaarden. I guess the first order, though, is get that up the stairs. Are you okay carrying it?"

"It's fine, just had to catch my breath," Brian said, shucking his own coat. It took another couple of minutes to negotiate the stairs and the hallway to Tristan's bedroom. Brian sat the nightstand a few feet from the bed.

"It's a really close match, color-wise," said Tristan. "This is just amazing. My piss-ant relatives took just about everything that wasn't nailed down when my granddad died. I think I was always surprised they didn't take the bed, too."

"No offense, but this looks so much better than the Walmart special you're using now," Brian teased gently as he hooked a thumb in the direction of the pressboard piece of furniture. Tristan sat on the bed, beckoned to Brian, and began to wrestle his way out of the sling. He rested his bandaged arm on the bed and drew Brian forward to stand in the vee of his legs.

"Thank you," he whispered. Brian looked down into Tristan's face. A five o'clock shadow was darkening his jaw line and it served to highlight those delicious lips. Brian bent to kiss him.

"Merry Christmas," murmured Brian between kisses. Tristan pulled Brian down on top of his body as he leaned back. Kisses led to groping hands. Eventually they slowed.

"I think I must have gone in the opposite direction in terms of sheer bulk of Christmas present. Wait here," Tristan said. He left the bedroom and Brian was deadly curious as to exactly what the hint had meant.

Tristan returned carrying a pair of legal size white envelopes. He sat cross-legged on the bed and handed one of them to Brian.

"Part one," said Tristan. Brian gently tore the envelope open. Inside were two sheets of paper. It was a hotel confirmation for two nights at a place called Thatcher Brook Inn in Vermont. "It's a Victorian B&B. I've never been there, but I've heard it's really nice. I thought we could go spend a weekend there. They even have sleigh rides and snowmobiling, depending on what floats your boat."

"This sounds just gorgeous. Yes! When? I might need to put in for days off at work."

"In a few weeks. Mid-January was the soonest I could get reservations," said Tristan.

Brian was thrilled. He gave Tristan an enthusiastic kiss. "Part two." Tristan handed him the second envelope. He hesitated, wondering if the two gifts were linked. Lift tickets maybe? Or dinner at some really epic place near the inn? The envelope felt heavier than just a few sheets of paper would make it. When Brian tore it open, a pair of keys spilled out into his hand. He looked at Tristan, not sure what they were for.

"Keys to this house. I haven't had the ones for the back door made yet. After getting hurt on the job, I realized I wanted somebody to have access to my house. If I had gotten hurt bad enough to stay in the hospital... I'm really fucking this up aren't I?" Tristan trailed off and stared at the ceiling. Brian was deeply touched.

"No, it's okay. I get it," Brian reassured him. Every inch of trust drew them closer together.

"Brian, you care. Even if we weren't sleeping together, you give a crap. You deal with my crazy job. You're sympathetic when I bitch about my insane family, and you don't have to be. I... need you in my life."

Brian pulled Tristan into a heated kiss. "I'm right here," he whispered.

Tristan leaned into the kiss, savoring the intensity. It was a selfish gift, but maybe, just maybe, he had gotten the Christmas gift thing right. Tristan's schedule was always crazy and the time they spent together often had the feel of stolen moments. He wanted a couple of days of uninterrupted time with Brian.

Brian worked at the buttons of Tristan's shirt, undoing them, pulling his shirt loose at the waist. Tristan attempted a one-handed version of the same with less success; trying to use his injured arm hurt too damn much. Brian's hand closed around his own.

"It's okay. Just relax. I've got it. Let me undress you... Speaking of which, just how have you been managing to get *dressed* in the morning for work?" Brian asked.

"Slowly, with a hell of a lot of frustration," replied Tristan.

"You could've called me."

"I think you're better at the undressing part, or maybe it's just that being around you makes me want to be naked in bed with you," Tristan murmured. His lips were pressed against the side of Brian's throat as Brian began to unbuckle his belt.

It took another minute or so until all their clothes were heaped on the floor. Brian began to leave a trail of kisses down the center of Tristan's chest then veered sideways to lavish attention on a nipple. The gentle sensations sent little shivery suggestions to Tristan's cock and it eagerly filled to an aching hardness. Brian's mouth descended lower, continuing its soft assault down across Tristan's hip and the front of his thigh.

"I've been thinking about kissing you all over pretty much all day," Brian said. "Are you enjoying this?"

Tristan lifted his head a little and saw Brian's smirk. "Oh, yeah, and it's going to be followed by me imprinting your body into the mattress."

"Mmm, promises, promises." Brian nipped lightly at the inside of Tristan's thigh, and then went back to his path down the rest of Tristan's leg. The hot slide of Brian's tongue between his toes just about sent him over the edge. Jesus God, much more and he was going to explode.

Tristan sat up and hooked an arm under Brian's body, dragging him back up toward the head of the bed.

"Want you now," Tristan said. He rolled over on top of Brian, pinning him and groped for a condom and lube in the top drawer of the old nightstand. Tristan braced himself on the elbow of his injured arm while doing so, but it was still uncomfortable.

"Squishing me here," Brian snickered and squirmed under Tristan's body, grinding their erections together.

"Gonna squish you some more," threatened Tristan and he placed a kiss on Brian's mouth.

"Give me that, before you get it all messed up trying to do it with one hand," Brian said and put the condom on Tristan.

"Roll over," said Tristan, as he stuffed a pillow under Brian's crotch, then he paused, wondering if this was comfortable for Brian. "You okay with lying on your belly? With my wrist all messed up, I can't lean on both hands."

"So long as you don't mind me messing up the pillow."

Tristan spent a few careful minutes of prepping, which soon left Brian writhing in pleasure. Geez, the tight heat of Brian's body was just about to tip Tristan over the edge. As he pushed in, he hesitated, gulping in a breath to maintain a little control. Brian squirmed and Tristan thrust into him.

Brian gasped and panted beneath him. In a minute, they hit a rhythm, bodies slapping together. Tristan felt the screaming tension of impending release and then came in a

hard rush of synapse-frying ecstasy, bucking erratically into his partner. He felt the pulsing clench of Brian's orgasm and Brian groaned in rapture.

Tristan slumped down across Brian's back, wrapping an arm around him, rolling them both sideways. He nuzzled his face into the side of Brian's neck.

"Merry Christmas," he whispered.

Morning sunshine slanted into the kitchen. Brian admired the curve of Tristan's ass covered by a pair of well-worn blue plaid flannel pajama bottoms as Tristan was loading the coffeepot. It was the only thing he had on. Brian could still see the fading remnants of the deep bruises on his lover's body. There was a knock at the front door.

"I'll get it," Brian said. Who would be knocking at Tristan's front door the day after Christmas? Good thing he'd put on his slacks from yesterday back on, otherwise he'd be answering the door in his boxers.

Brian opened the door to face an unfamiliar older woman in a long fur coat. "Who are you?" she demanded, looking amazingly startled. "And what are doing in my son's house!?"

"Um... My name's..." is all he got out before the woman pushed her way into the hallway. Tristan came out of the kitchen.

"Tristan! Oh my God, it wasn't just your arm. You absolutely have to quit that miserable job. You need to

come home and let someone take care of you. This is just absurd!" she rattled on.

"Mother..." Tristan said.

"And to have to knock just to get into your house. It's just ridiculous that your family has no keys! And some half naked man opens your door. Is he one of your homosexual conquests?" she asked, turning her glare on Brian.

Brian watched the interplay in a kind of fascinated horror. It was half soap-opera, half train wreck.

"Mother, you need..." Tristan tried again.

"Do you realize you are destroying your life? What would Felicity think? She is so sweet and from an impeccable family. Her mother told me that you didn't so much as call her yesterday. She cares about you."

"Felicity has a boyfriend and so do I!" Tristan finally managed.

Brian decided he'd had enough of this disaster. He stepped in between them. "Who cares deeply about Tristan. You are going to turn around and march right back out that door, and leave us alone," Brian growled.

"This is not over," she muttered, and stalked out.

Brian locked the door behind her, and turned to face Tristan. The man looked embarrassed and resigned.

"So now you've met my mother," Tristan said softly and walked back into the kitchen. Brian followed him. The

comment she had made about the keys hit a soft spot in Brian's heart. Now he better understood the sentiment behind Tristan giving him the keys. It really was a token of just how much Tristan was beginning to trust him.

In the kitchen, Tristan was leaning against the sink, staring out the window into the miniscule backyard. Brian came up behind him and put his arms around Tristan's shoulders, placing soft kisses down the back of his neck. He could feel the muscles there tied in knots of tension.

"She's a real terror," Brian said.

"God... She seems to have this idea that if she screams loudly enough or chews my ass often enough that she'll get her way. It makes me furious."

Brian stood holding him for several minutes as some of the taut anger finally drained from Tristan's body. Brian gently spun Tristan around to face him. Now was a good time to be honest and bare some of his soul. He pressed a fingertip to Tristan's lips. "Don't answer, just listen. I lied. It's more than just caring deeply; I've fallen in love with you."

Tristan kissed the finger against his lips and whispered, "Is it too hokey to say I think the keys might be safe with you?"

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