A Tris is Still a Tris

by kattahi

Summary

On a cold winter night, James has a most unpleasant case. A good thing Tristan is there when he gets home.

The Hendersons had never been among my favourites. They were – to put it mildly – rude, and oddly enough, the same went for their animals. I wouldn't have thought it possible for cows to sneer, but the Henderson livestock seemed to be some sort of exception.

Meeting rude people was part of the job, though, and I had never let their behaviour get to me much.

Not until they called me out on a cold January night to help a calving cow. I had half expected the cow to be standing out on a meadow, despite the deep snow, and I imagined myself having to walk through that snow to get to her. Unfortunately, I was wrong. For once, the Hendersons led me into the barn, where the cow was lying in a corner box, chest heaving painfully.

It was my one stroke of luck during the whole visit. I soon discovered that the calf was dead, and the cow dying.

"You should have called me sooner," I said, trying to keep my voice level. This was one of the sneering cows, but even so, I hated seeing an animal suffer.

"She's always managed fine before," Mr. Henderson said. "Besides, you lot tend to kill the beast more often than not."

I bit down my reply and instead asked, "May I have some warm water, a soap and a towel, please?"
He muttered something in a low voice and headed off. I didn't care to have him repeat it – I was fairly certain whatever he'd said, it wasn't anything I wanted to hear.

The water, when it came, was anything but warm, the soap was hard as wood and the so-called towel an old flour sack. I lathered up as well as I could, which wasn't much, and got to work. Unfortunately, the calf wasn't just dead, he was big, too. It took me longer than expected to get the stinking pieces of flesh out of the womb, and once I had, the best that could be said for the cow was that she wasn't dead yet.

I cared for her the best I could and gave strict orders to her owners to contact me, should anything happen, hoping against hope that care and medicine would help her enough that I wouldn't be called back out in this cold.

All I had to do then was make my way back. The snow was by now so deep it was very hard to drive. To make matters worse, my arms were stiff both with the cold and with water that was quickly turning into ice. The soap had done even less to clean me up than the sack had done to dry me off, and I smelled heavily of decaying calf.

Somehow I made it all the way home, and stepped out of the car, fumbling with the door keys. After dropping them three times, I gave up the futile battle and rang the doorbell. Mrs. Hall was bound to have gone home, and Siegfried had been out on a case when I left, but I had some hopes that he'd returned since then.

The lights in the hall went on, and footsteps hurried to the door.

"My God, Jim, you look terrible!"

"Tristan?" I said, my relief marred by the fear that this might be some kind of cold-induced hallucination. *The Little Matchstick Girl* and its tragic ending came to mind. "You're home?"

"A bit of post-exam rest and relaxation," he said, ushering me inside. "Getting my hands dirty and all that. Which you certainly have, judging by the smell."

"Dead calf," I explained between clattering teeth.

"Mm. I'm surprised they let you home, in this weather."

"Hendersons."

"Say no more." He started peeling off my coat. "Come on, I'll run you a bath. I was supposed to go out with the fair Diana tonight, but something tells me she's not likely to show."

I followed him inside, peeling off my ice-cold shirt which by now was sticking to the hairs on my arms.

"Of course, technically she's not the fair Diana," Tristan said as he started pouring me my bath. "She's a brunette. But the fair Diana sounds so much better. Hop in, Jim. The sooner you start getting soaked, the better."

I did as told. The warm water felt scalding hot to my frozen limbs, but I reveled in it never the less, splashing water up on those areas of my body that were not yet soaked.

Tristan leaned against the wall, watching me with a sort of cynical fascination. "The Hendersons on a night like this... I don't envy you."

"Thank you for that understatement," I muttered, scrubbing the last of the gore off my arms.
"You must be almost frozen solid." His eyes narrowed, and he tutted his tongue in a disapproving fashion. "You could catch pneumonia."

He sounded much too cheerful about it, and I told him so. He only laughed at me.

"What you need, my good Dr. Herriot," he said, crossing his arms and sounding remarkably like an aging professor, "is a hot cup of tea with whisky, a bed with lots and lots of blankets, and a hot water bottle. Or possibly a warm body."

"That sounds divine," I said. The smell was almost gone now. I sank down into the water, closing my eyes.

Tristan said something, and I raised my head from the water so I could hear him. "What?"

"I said, you can sleep in my bed if you want."

I stared at him. "Why would I want that?"

"Because I will be in it," he said patiently. He gestured at himself. "Warm body."

After waiting quite some time for my reply – which I was much too dumbfounded to provide – he laughed a little and said, "Don't look so scandalized, Jim. It's only sound medical advice. You know that as well as I do."

I wasn't so sure. Well, yes, it was sound medical advice, but I didn't know about the "only". At that moment, Tristan reminded me a little too much of an old room-mate of mine.

"What do you say?" he asked. "Shall make you some tea and whisky? Warm up the bed for you?"

I tried to avoid the answer by rubbing some soap on my shoulders, but dropped the soap and had to chase it through the tub. "All right," I said, my eyes still on the soap. "That sounds reasonable."

"Well, then!"

I didn't see his expression, but his voice sounded very chipper. As the door shut behind him, I wondered if, perhaps, I'd made a mistake.

I had time to change my mind several times – four times, to be specific – before I actually entered Tristan's bedroom. He was sitting in pyjamas on the bed, reading a detective novel. As he had promised, there was a cup of steaming liquid on the bedside table, and the bed itself was so full of blankets it resembled a small hill.

"Ah, there you are!" he said, jumping down from the bed. He pointed a stern finger at my feet. "And you've got socks on. Very good. We like socks. Come on, jump in."

I did as told. The bed was delightfully warm, especially when Tristan had arranged all the blankets on top of me. I took a slow sip of the tea as he lay down beside me. The taste and scent of whisky was heaven to my tired senses, and I had to admit, Tristan's body warmth next to me was most appealing as well.

"Thanks, Tris," I said. "You're a life saver."

"I'm a martyr, that's what I am," he said, rubbing his feet against mine. "I've always hated cold feet
in my bed.” He sounded anything but upset about it, and I laughed. Now that I was safe and warm in a soft bed, I started feeling just how tired I was.

I don't know how and when I fell asleep.

I do know, however, how I woke up. I was in a groggy dreamland between asleep and awake, snuggling up against the body next to me, when I heard Tristan giggle and murmur, "Well, you're certainly enjoying yourself."

That woke me up enough to realise that I was sporting an erection, and not only that, but practically pressing it into Tristan's stomach. I drew back, mumbling an apology. My cheeks were heating. Of all the horrid, embarrassing situations I had found myself in, this had to be one of the worst.

"Take it easy, Jim,” he said, the laughter still evident in his voice. "It's not like you ordered it to happen.”

"I'm sorry,” I repeated. "It was an accident. I don't find you... that is to say, I don't not find you... I would never...”

I knew I should pick a sentence and run with it, but couldn't find one that would work. Damn Tristan and that sly look of his! My room-mate once again came to mind, which did nothing to ease my discomfort.

"You know,” Tristan said, sounding very thoughtful. "Not to read too much into this...”

"I'm really sorry.”

"I know, you said. Thing is, I was supposed to go out with Diana tonight. And when you expect a date and don't get one, it tends to leave you a bit disappointed. So if you're feeling up to it...” He snorted. "Sorry. Bad choice of words.”

I stared at him. Well, if nothing else, it was good to know I hadn't imagined things. ”Are you serious?”

"Do you want me to be serious?” he countered.

"Hm,” I said. He took it as approval – which I suppose it was – and slipped his hand under my pyjamas. I gasped for breath, and then grabbed his face with both my hands, pressing my mouth against his.

He was a light kisser, yielding under my tongue, sucking it in a way that drove me crazy. The fact that his hand was still inside my pyjamas didn't help matters either, and I pushed against him impatiently.

"Why, Jim!” he said when I let go of his mouth. His own breathing was as laboured as mine. "This isn't your first time!”

"Never said it was.” My hands found the buttons on his pyjama jacket, and I eased it off, caressing his lean chest. The pressure was rising inside me, and I moaned with pleasure.

"God, I love that sound,” he said, and I felt him beginning to get hard too. By now, I was much too flustered to do much about it. I caressed him rather aimlessly, and kept thrusting my groin into his fist.

His fingers moved faster and faster, and he spoke short, simple phrases that never the less drove
me mad. "That's right. Don't hold back now." And in a low, intense whisper: "Come for me."

Tristan Farnon can be very difficult to resist, and that voice just drove me over the edge. It wasn't long before I did as told, coming in his hand, my own holding his arse in a firm grip.

"Good lad," he whispered afterwards, nibbling my ear lightly."Time to return the favour."

He took longer than me, but then, he hadn't been hard from the start. Also, I admit I enjoyed dragging it out a bit, making him impatient – having him at my mercy, for once. A bit of revenge, maybe, for all those prank calls. By the time he came, he was both crying and laughing, shouting my name as a curse or a blessing.

Even afterwards, we didn't stop. I had to keep touching Tristan, and though I had known him to be rather lazy in other respects, he was anything but easily tired this night. He even kept making little comments that made me want to hit him and kiss him both – and I usually ended up doing so.

"Feeling warmer now?" he asked when we were worn out, lying in each other's arms.

"Ever so warm," I told him, kissed his nose, and went back to sleep.

I had somehow almost noticed that the sun was up, though I persisted in staying asleep. Even the phone was only a vague buzzing in my ears, less real than ever any dream. But when Tristan started shaking my shoulder, I reluctantly turned over on my back and grumbled, "What?"

"Patient for you."

I peered up on him. He was already dressed and looked appallingly alert.

"You said you'd take any calls tonight," I reminded him.

"I did say that. But, one, it is now morning, which is a very different matter. Two, Mrs. Pumphrey is on the phone. Your beloved Peke has gone flopp-bot again."

I immediately got up, ignoring his snicker. "All right. Tell her I'm coming."

He nodded. "Will do." On his way to the door, he stopped and turned around. "Oh, and if you want breakfast, Siegfried is downstairs making some."

I stopped short. "Siegfried's back?"

"Mm. Seems the roads were easier once the snow stopped falling. But you know how he drives."

"What have you told him?" I asked, dreading the thought of having to explain to my boss and good friend that I'd spent the night being intimate with his brother.

"Oh, I told him about the Henderson's, of course. He was very sympathetic," Tristan rolled his eyes at my expression. "Don't worry so much, Jim. He won't ask any questions. He never does."

I folded my arms and regarded him coldly. "Exactly how many young men have you saved from a premature death, Mr. Farnon?"

"That, my dear friend," he said, "would be telling."

With a last snort of laughter, he disappeared out the door. I pulled on my trousers. Time for me to
pay a visit to Mrs. Pumphrey.

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