

Brian and Susanne look for holly and talk about her estrus

Terrae

By C. Elliot Ritter

*With Jule (pronounced Yule) coming up toward the end of Frost Moon (December), Susanne wants to go out and collect holly for decoration. Brian has gotten enough influence with Duke Andago to have a small expense account, which he's used to buy himself and Susanne some nicer clothes.*

*Their named months, so far, are Harvest Moon (October), Autumn Moon (November), Frost Moon (December), Snow Moon (January) and Ice Moon (February). The months are identical to Gregorian months, and the Moon nomenclature is simply a poetic device by the First Generation.*

*Brian has also becoming increasingly closer to Susanne, more in a friendly way, but that Susanne is beginning to have feelings for Brian; feelings that he doesn't quite share.*

Brian entered his room to see Susanne wearing a fur-lined blue and gold winter dress.

She glanced up from slipping her boots on and saw Brian. Smiling she twirled, asking, "How do I look?"

Brian wasn't sure what to say, he found himself saying, "You look beautiful."

Susanne smiled shyly, saying, "You don't mean it."

"I do. I mean your dress is beautiful," Brian said, hoping to correct himself.

"Thanks," she was still smiling. "You really think I'm beautiful?"

This time it was Brian's turn to be shy, "I think I just said it on accident."

"Well that means you really mean it," Susanne said and grabbed his hand, "Come with me."

"Where are we going?"

“Outside,” Susanne said picking up Brian’s coat for him, “we’re going to get some holly.”

“What for?” Brian slipped the coat on and Susanne grabbed his hand again.

“Jule,” She said simply.

“For, oh, like a wreath or something?”

“Or something,” she said. He followed her out one of the rear doors of the palace into the yard which lead to the garden. It was cold enough of a day that the night’s dusting of snow had stuck, giving everything a coating of white. “It’s pretty out here, isn’t it?”

“It never really snowed where I was from,” Brian said as the crossed the grassy field.

“Was it too warm or something?” Susanne said, her breath forming a small cloud in front of her.

“Not really,” Brian said, “but kinda. I lived in a river valley, so snow either went north or south.”

“I like the snow,” Susanne said and took Brian’s arm, “I kind of like you, too.”

Brian could feel himself blushing, “I know. You know how I feel about it though.”

“I know,” Susanne said and pulled him a bit closer, “but I know how I feel, too.”

They walked into the garden in silence and headed to a small grove of holly bushes that decorated a clearing that in the summer had a small pond with concrete benches surrounding it. Susanne took a knife from her boot and cut a few branches, handing them to Brian as she did it.

“Brian, can I ask you something?” She asked after cutting a branch.

“Of course,” Brian juggled the branches from one hand to the other.

“You won’t get mad at me?” She asked innocently.

“Why would I get mad at you?” Brian laughed, then it dawned on him why.

“It’s about,” she sighed and looked up for a moment.

“Yeah, I know,” Brian said, “Just ask me.”

“You won’t get mad?”

“I promise.”

Susanne turned around, holding her knife like it was a toy before realizing she should put it away. “My, um, estrus is coming up in Ice Moon. I was hoping you would help me with it.”

“How would I do that?” Brian juggled the holly to under his arm and put his hands inside his robes.

“That’s why you’re gonna get mad,” Susanne said.

“Estrus, that’s like ... ohh,” Brian looked up at the palace for a moment trying to think of the right words. Most he just wanted to be inside right now. “kinda like, um, going into heat.”

Susanne looked at him angrily before realizing he wasn’t trying to insult her. “Yeah, I guess.”

“So what am I supposed to do to help?” Brian had a feeling he knew the answer, but wanted her to say it.

She shuttered, Brian couldn’t tell whether it was from the cold or what she was going to say. “Make love to me. A, a lot.”

“That’s what I thought you were going to say,” Brian juggled the holly again, this time back into his hands. “I don’t know. Should I, um, feel honored that you asked me?”

“Well,” Susanne sighed, “it’s, um, if I were married I’d be with my husband and if I were seeing someone it would be them. But if you’re not, like, with anyone you ask a good friend.”

“And ... oh, I’m a good friend,” Susanne nodded sheepishly. “So I should feel honored.”

“Yeah.”

“Uh, wow,” Brian suddenly realized he didn’t feel cold anymore, which worried him a little, “I, I don’t know. I’ll have to think about it.”

“No, I, I promise I’ll think about it.”

Susanne turned away from him. “No you won’t.”

“Susanne, I promise, I will,” he tried to figure out the right thing to say, “I’m a guy, it’s not like I don’t think about that all the time anyway.”

“About me?” Susanne asked hopefully.

“I wouldn’t say that,” the truth was he did sometimes. Waking up with her next to him on a cold morning was a wonderful feeling. And despite what she was, knowing he could be intimate with a young woman at nearly any time was pleasant. Just seeing her now, far from the dirty kitchen girl she was only a few weeks ago, made him like her even more.

“Do you like me?” Susanne asked, gazing up at Brian.

He took her hands. They were warmer than his, but not by much. “I do like you. I don’t think like how you like me,” her ears went down, “but I might, at some point.”

Her ears perked back up. “Really?”

“You’re my best friend here,” he admitted, “I mean I’m around you more than anyone else and I actually like being around you.”

She smiled shyly. “I like being around you, too.”

“And you keep me warm at night,” Brian smiled, “And I’m cold now, so let’s go inside.”

Susanne nodded. “I’m freezing.”

“So am I,” Brian took her arm and the headed inside.

“Brian, one thing before we, um.”

“Yeah,” they stopped just before leaving the garden.

“Will you kiss me?”

Brian looked into her brown eyes for a long moment before taking her hands. She smiled slightly and Brian found himself, almost against his will, leaning in and kissing her softly on her lips. It was ... different. Not exactly bad, but strange in a nice way. He leaned back and looked at her again. She opened her eyes and Brian could see the insides of her ears flushing.

“Let’s get inside.”