

Snow Bunny

"Okay, I know I said I'd be open to this whole Yule thing but how many more stores do we need to go to?" Lucas pulled onto the access road for the third time in the last hour. He headed to the next cluster of stores two traffic lights down.

"She's looking for mistletoe and you know your girl is picky." Shani replied. The woman leaned forward, using the rearview mirror to smooth out the edges of her new hairdo.

"How about you get out of the mirror so he can see behind us?" Rhonda said with a smirk plastered across her lips.

"Lucas? Are you going to let your girlfriend talk to me like that?"

Lucas glanced up into the rearview mirror raising an eyebrow in the process. "She was your girlfriend first."

"Any who," Rhonda interjected in an attempt to keep them on task. "I only have one more stop to make. I called ahead and the clerk assured me that they had the perfect mistletoe for my altar. After that, we can make our trip through the woods, collect the last of the pine cones and fir clippings for the yule log and I'll make sure you two are both rewarded for your patience in this long excursion."

The vehicle quieted down at Rhonda's comment. Neither of her lovers want to ruffle her feathers when she'd just offered to reward them.

"Look, it's snowing." Rhonda leaned forward stretching her neck to get a better view of the sky out of the Chevy's front window.

"Here she goes." Shani caught Lucas' eye in the mirror. He mouthed *what* with a look of curiosity in his eyes. "In case you haven't figured it out, this is one of Rhonda's favorite times of year. And not just because of the snow. Did you tell him your snow bunny story?"

"Snow bunny?"

"It's a really cute story, a bit on the freaky side - unusual that is - but cute none the less."

"I'd love to hear the snow bunny story."

Annoyed that Shani had just put some of her business out in the open, Rhonda said, "I'm sure you would, but you'll just have to wait."

And wait he did. Rhonda kept her lips sealed until they'd picked up the mistletoe, the three white poinsettias she'd reserved and a vine of green ivy. They'd already grabbed the candles, and her cauldron, candle holders and glass snowflakes were in her winter altar kit. She'd retrieved the sun symbol tiles from her great grandmother's things, which left them collecting the last few items off of The Vault House property.

Lucas rushed them through the unloading process, grabbing as many bags as his hands could manage and then stacking more beneath his chin. That only left one bag each for Shani and Rhonda.

When they headed down the path towards the sport where the Douglas fir trees had been planted Lucas asked, "So are you going to tell me the snow bunny story now?"

Rhonda shot a not so pleasant look at her best friend and bed mate. Shani only shrugged and continued to wind her way down the path.

"Well, it is a twofold story. See, as it goes, my mother and father wanted a family. But after two ectopic pregnancies they had all but given up hope."

Lucas pulled a branch to the side, allowing the two women to pass before following. They veered a little to the left continuing down a path dotted with fresh deer tracks in the thickening snow.

"The losses took a toll on my mother, so my father found a substitute, if you will. He brought her home a beautiful white rabbit. And of course, she named the bunny Snow."

"How lame," Shani said.

"Don't interrupt," Lucas warned. He eased his fingers between Rhonda's as the path widened allowing them to walk side by side.

"As I was saying before I was so rudely interrupted," Rhonda ignored Shani's lip smacking, "She loved that bunny like it was a child. She'd even managed to train her. When she wanted to go out, she'd hop around and scratch at the cat door and someone would let her out into the little fenced in garden area they'd created for her."

"Wasn't that sweet?" Lucas said as he squeezed Rhonda's hand.

"Yeah. One night though, there was a bad storm. My parents hunkered down in the house, choosing to make the most of the power outage and their 'alone' time."

"Ewww. T.M.I."

With a scowl on her face, Rhonda said, "Oh grow up. And didn't Lucas just tell you to quit interrupting?"

The couple stepped through the brush, while Shani continued a little further into the clearing. Rhonda knelt down, gathering a few pine cones from the dropping scattered about. "The firs are that way." She pointed in the direction Shani had gone.

Lucas pulled the hood of Rhonda's cape securely over her head, securing the side with the broach pinned to the side. The snow was picking up, they needed to move fast if they wanted to return before the forest was submerged.

"Lead the way."

Rhonda continued the story as they walked, "The next morning, after the storm, Snow was nowhere to be found. They searched for weeks and finally my mother came to terms with the fact that Snow was gone. She also discovered that she was pregnant again. But things were different this time. There were no complications."

They reached the place in the clearing where five Douglas fir trees were planted. In the center of the group of trees stood what appeared to be a hand crafted square brick fire pit or oven.

“What is this place?” Lucas asked.

“It’s an offering site. The trees form a pentacle. There are four others in the property, each representing an element based upon their position. If you could see it from above, the site formed a larger pentacle with The Vault House located in the center.”

Lucas turned around in a circle, taking in the last amount of craftsmanship necessary to design both this small gather and the larger image. “How was all of this done?”

“Some questions I do not have an answer for. It’s almost like the Egyptians and the pyramids; Scientist have tried to duplicate it, but that still doesn’t explain the level of knowledge of what they believe to be simple people of the time.”

Rhonda walked the circle of trees until her spirit connected with the one that would provide her the missing item for her altar. She waved Greg over, taking the clippers he held out to her. Her fingers brushed over the soft needles of the tree, the branches springing back with each passing gesture. Selecting one from the middle section, she clipped off a bit of the branch and wrapped it in a red and green cloth.

“That’s it,” she said.

“About time. Now can we go before we die out here in the snow?”

“You know,” Rhonda said to her friend, “You didn’t have to wait on us. You are the one who insisted on coming.”

“Fine! I’ll see you two back at the house.” Shani stormed away, cursing under her breath.

When she was far enough out of earshot, Lucas said, “I’m glad we’re alone.”

“Me too. But she’s right. We need to get back. The snow is coming down harder.”

Heading back towards the trail, the couple huddled together.

“So I take it you were the miracle child.”

“Yes. But I wasn’t the only miracle. My mother’s pregnancy was uneventful until February, which was close to her estimated due date. It was the night of the Snow moon and a blizzard had blown through dropping at least eight feet of snow. My mother was lying in bed, watching the storm when she heard scratching at the door. At first, she didn’t know what it was, but eventually, she waddled over to check out the noise. When she opened the door, there she was, a puff of white against the dark hardwood floor.”

“Wait, the bunny?”

“Yes. One minute she was there, the next she was gone. My mother went into labor. I was born at home that night under the Snow Moon.”

“Aww that was a cute story, and fitting for a night like this. Maybe one day you and I will have a story like that to tell to our children.”

They reached the place where they’d entered the woods, both enjoying their moment together. Tiny paw prints in the snow lead to the house. Those prints looked like rabbit prints and Rhonda swore she saw the bushy tail of a white rabbit dart past the black tire of their SUV.

As expected, Shani waited for them on the porch but it didn’t matter. They’d just shared a very intimate moment once again initiated by the spirit of the snow bunny.

Ana'Gia Wright