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## Moon Cast Smile

by Juliet Robinson

We enter the glade and form our circle.

Above us the stars burn. No one speaks, no one looks at each other. Silent, we stand, silent we witness and slowly the moon passes over the glade. Its light bathing us, refreshing us, rekindling our powers which had dwindled over the last month.

Once it has passed, we turn taking our leave. All solemn, all silent.

Then to my left someone softly giggles. It is melodious, infused with joy and it is sacrilegious. I freeze, stalling in my procession and glance at the chuckler. She is looking straight at me, her face dark in the shadows of the trees, but her eyes stare brightly at me and she smiles. Her teeth are white and starlight pours from her. I am chilled, though not with dread, something flickers in my chest. An ache. A yearning. She is beautiful and unashamedly powerful. I turn and hurry from the glade.

Over the next lunar cycle, I busy myself with my healer duties. I try to push the giggler from my mind. She is one of the Lunar Circle; one chosen to take in the powers of the moon and practice the sacred art of healing. A venerable duty. Our place in the circle is an honour. We were picked as children and trained by our predecessor whose place we now stand in. We have always been kept apart.

This keeps us safe. Not knowing the other parts of the circle ensures that it can never be broken. I shouldn't have glanced at the giggler, and she shouldn't have been looking at me.

I try not to think about her, but I wake at night to the echo of her laugh ringing in my room. I draw my quilts tighter in a strange attempt to shield myself. But what am I shielding myself from? I burn and as I burn it seems like her smile hangs in the dark above me. A bewitching moon cast smile.

I don't sleep.

Slowly the moon moves through her cycle.

Back to the glade I go. My powers are weak, I am drawn out, wearied, but I am also excited.

I keep my eyes on the ground as I join the circle, then as the moon reaches her zenith and I cast my gaze skyward, I risk a glance to my left. She is there. Her radiant red hair tumbling down her back. She is looking at me and her look tells me she knew I would glance her way. I blush to the tips of my toes, my face burns. She smiles and my heart nearly bursts from my chest.

Another lunar cycle. Another month of no sleep. She haunts me. Every red head I see could be her. I rush after a woman in the market, but when I reach a tentative hand out to touch her shoulder she turns and she isn't my lady of the moon. Her face is tired, bitter and holds none of her magic.

The moon is full and to the glade I go.

This afternoon I took my time as I bathed and dressed. I wanted to look more than myself to be worthy of her.

I steel myself; I don't look her way. I want to, but I don't. I am too afraid of what I will see, what I may unleash.

The moon clears the glade and I am sated, but not in the way I wish.

As one we turn and take our leave. My spine tingles telling me she is near, just yards from me in the darkness. I can smell her, lavender, sage and something spicy. My hand stretches out instinctively and there it finds another. Fingers curl round fingers and I am undone.