**Harvest Moon Delirium**

At the stroke of midnight, I was stirred from sleep by the insistent brightness of the moon. Bewitched by its enticing fullness, I found myself rising from bed. Calmly I slipped out of the house and into the forest,feeling almost as though I was sleepwalking through a dream. Drums were beating somewhere up ahead; steady as a heartbeat I marched to the rhythm, as if my feet knew where to go. Every few minutes I looked up to see the moon, and I was filled with unexplainable sense of joy and wildness; I wanted to dance naked beneath her and see the moonlight play across my skin.

Flickering just ahead was a blazing fire. Echoes bounced off of the trees around me, echoes of the drumbeats. Girls were dancing in a clearing around the enormous fire I had seen. Hurrying to join them, I was welcomed with open arms and kisses. I danced and twirled, laughing and whooping. Joining their circle was natural and easy.

Kindling was thrown on the fire along with strange bundles of herbs that sparked and fizzled when they hit the flames. Luscious smelling flowers strung together in fragrant necklaces were placed around my neck. My senseswere intoxicated and confused by all ofthe strangeness and of it. Needles of rosemary were crushed under our feet, releasing a pungent, spicy scent.

Overhead there was a sudden gust of wind and the alarming sound of beating wings. Peering up into the deep purple smoky sky above me I saw a huge owl, coming down to

a graceful landing in the midst of our circle. Quiet descended upon the gathering, and I saw that the owl had the wrinkled and wizened face of a crone. Riveting liquid golden eyes rested deep in her ancient face.

Seven of the girls went forward to her bearing tributes of flowers and bowls of honey. The moon was now directly above us, and the majestic owl stretched her wings as her eyes lit up with a supernatural intensity. Unrestrained delirium took over the crowd;the dancing started up again with a fury, and I could feel the drumbeats in my chest. Vivid hallucinations (I'm not sure that's what they were) of wild ribbons of color swirling up from the fire and hundreds of jewel tone snakes writhing on the forest floor shook my vision.

When the music stopped suddenly, I collapsed onto the rosemary scented earth. Xanthine lights blinded me and I was sucked down into darkness that seemed neverending. Yet after an eternity of falling, I awoke in my own bed with a jerk, to see beams of morning sunlight

turning the sheets buttery gold. Zetetic to the bone,I flung the covers off of myself and found a single cream colored feather the length of my arm placed with care on my pillow.

