

THE WATER GODDESS

“Invisible garlands blossom at shadowy crossroads where you’d least expect,” the seer said. “These flowers are heartthrobs of the goddess who lives on the cliffs. She’s a cloud skirting the mountains until it rains; then you’ll find her in the water bodies.”

“Tell me,” I said. (I’d lived in forest valleys all my life, not on the cliffs, so hadn’t heard the story of her birth, knowing nothing of her alchemy as ice, mist, and water.) But the seer had vanished in his image in the pond, slipping nearly to the bottom. White water lilies rippled in my pupils as a stone skipped across. Rivulets carved a throat into rocks. Our ancestors knew of a voice there, a good-luck goddess.

From clefts of mossed rock, the goddess speaks in breezes of flowers wafting toward banks of the well pond. Her voice carries to streams, rivers, and mountains.

“If you fail to climb the well, you’ll never emerge to scent the spring,” spoke the goddess, her face reflected in the stream-fed pond as a bird’s wing, her eyes, spinel crystals. In this forest of glimpses and ramblings, where wind distills trickles from the lichened cliffs, my eyes, at rest in the shade pools, deepen with my gaze, speeding on through the distance.