

I learned that the roots of the foxglove were poisonous, that verbena could quiet headaches, that quince could be boiled into a sticky, delicious jam. In time, I knew more than my mother. Soon, she began to turn to me for advice. When should we harvest? When should we sow? What would do best in the patch of sunlight beside the gate?

I could whisper to the old, twisted wisteria and it would turn green at my urging. I could encourage the sweet peas to blossom with one word. Let Aurora smile at the shopkeepers and wave to the boys in the school yard. My dreams were of night-blooming flowers, white on the outside, but green as my heart on the inside, green as my garden grew.

I never complained when people didn't notice me. I was certain my time would come soon enough. There was dirt under my fingernails and I was too shy to speak, but on my next birthday I would turn sixteen. Everything would change then. I would cast away my fears and step into my future. I would comb the tangles from my hair and

wash the dirt away. When I walked through town, people would whisper, *Is that Green?* And I would say, *Yes it's me, I've been here all along, but you've been too blind to see.*

I would have gone with my family on the day that it happened, but someone had to stay home and pull weeds. Someone had to coax the tomatoes into turning red and persuade the squash blossoms to bloom, and that person was me. We lived within sight of the city, which glowed silver at night and shone like gold in the afternoon. Every week we brought our vegetables across the river to sell to city people who couldn't get enough of our peas and lettuce and beans. Every week we crossed the bridge, and as we did I held my breath. I could feel happiness then.

I lived for those trips to the city. On the weeks I couldn't go, I pouted for hours. The city was my treasure, and I loved everything about it: the shops on the avenues, the books in the stalls, the chocolates weighed and measured by vendors in the