



TANIA MOORE

THE MESSENGER

Snug beneath the pulse of living breath, in a protected and watery nest, I grew and learned to suck my thumb. Like other gardens I would come to know, though, this secret place was filled with strife. My mother had carried and born her first child, my older sister Delilah, just three months before the cluster of cells that would be me found refuge in her womb. My arrival, then, was neither intended nor wanted.

My mother was not the only one less than ecstatic at my appearance in the world. I was a usurper, an interloper who stole, if not my mother's love, then at least her time. Delilah was only eleven months old when I was born. At a year and a half, her flaxen hair haloed in sunlight, she sits beside me on the grass in Walden, Vermont, where we were born and would spend our first few years. In the snapshot I squint sleepily over at Delilah as she lifts her finger towards my eye, perhaps to see if this is really happening, if I am, in fact, real. Someone, however, was watching, capturing Delilah's suspended finger, her expression curious and perturbed. And what, meanwhile, was I thinking as I gazed into the dappled branches and watched the shifting pattern of sunlight through the trees? Did I understand, even then, in that time before words, that this was a sacred place, and I was bathed in love?



My mother's devotion to Delilah was all-consuming, but I snatched comfort where I could, and when I was old enough, I would often remain at the dinner table with my father after my mother and sister had gone upstairs. He would share with me his theories about ancient civilization or astronomy, or why he preferred Swift to Shelley, and while I did not understand everything he told me, I discovered that if I bided my time, I might learn all manner of tantalizing details, like that my name came from Titania, Queen of the Fairies