

REMEDY

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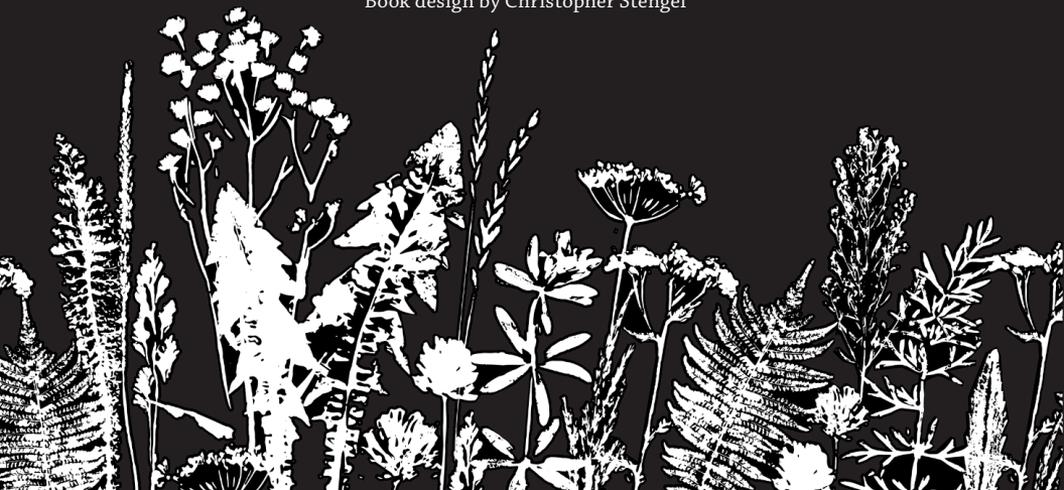
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CHAPTER ONE

Some days, when I first wake and the hazy light filters through the blinds, striping my white blanket like there were bars on my window, I try to remember what it felt like to be well. I was so little then. Maybe seven or eight? It wouldn't have occurred to me to feel lucky. I wouldn't have noticed that nothing hurt.

I was still discovering all of my body's potential—the lengthening bones, the coiled muscles. Every so often I could stretch and touch a shelf that I hadn't been able to reach before. My teeth fell out and grew in. Once in a while, I'd have a skinned knee.

We used to play with scooters and parachutes and hula-hoops in gym. Back when I was still allowed to take gym. And one Field Day, they brought out the second grade and we hula-hooped in front of the whole school. One by one, each hoop faltered and clattered down to the blacktop. Except mine. I kept it spinning until the principal stood next to me and caught the hoop with her hand. The second-grade hula-hoop champion. I could have twirled for hours.

They gave me a certificate. I remember tracing the gold seal embossed on the heavy paper. I would have saved something like that certificate. But I probably didn't pack it for the move. Definitely not for the second move.

I'd have left the award behind because it would have made my mother sad to see me treasuring it. If she noticed me folding it between the pages of a book or tucking it into a shoebox, she'd think I was feeling sorry for myself. My mother has sacrificed so much on my account. I couldn't hurt her. Besides, we are Wakely women, after all. We do not feel sorry for ourselves.

That is what I remind myself while lowering my two feet onto the slats of the wood floor. Brace myself and heave the rest of my body to a standing position. I try to ignore the fog in my brain, the thick coating of sickness in my mouth. I yank the cord to the blinds and the bars of light break and scatter into dapples of sun.

It's morning. The glare makes my eyes ache. I try to feel grateful the way I've been taught to be.