

MARYANNE STAHL

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## CAST

**I** BEGIN IN THE NORTH, lighting each of the thirteen candles in sequence, an unbroken chain. White candles to the east, red to the south, white west, and red round to complete the circle. I bend over rose petals, a dish of water, a bowl of earth, three birch twigs and a small mirror, then stand in the center of the blazing circle and raise my arms to the moon. I close my eyes and feel the pull, the warm electric tug to my insides, between my legs.

*William, I whisper. Love me.*

Beyond my circle darkness stretches to the ocean; I hear its roar. Behind me a thick, two-acre wood separates this bower from the curiosity of strangers. I am alone beneath the full moon at a beach house in Montauk, Long Island. The ocean beyond the cliff stretches all the way to England.

My body fills with light, and lightens. My bones feel hollow. I almost don't exist, and that feels right. I am right to be here, where I met you, William, more than a year ago now. The grass was trampled that night; tonight it sighs in the breeze. The stars—were they more plentiful then? I can't tell. They fill the sky, a sky bigger than I can see.

I step outside the circle and the wind blows strong. The candles flicker in their glass jars; some go out. Soon I will be in darkness, as you left me. I murmur an incantation and then, having cast my spell that you should ever love me, I run from you toward the sea.