

## Maeve Vasko



### witch

1. gretel carries stones in her pockets & a knife in her hand, because she worries *what if what if what if*—
2. her father dies & her brother marries, & gretel lives with him & his wife in an dusty back room where she empties her pockets & hides loaves of bread wrapped in paper beneath the floor boards. her sister-in-law gives birth to twins, a boy & a girl; her brother names them *hansel & gretel*. gretel accidentally breaks a glass bowl when she hears.
3. she hates the taste of sugar. even too-sweet berries make her vomit, make her remember a musty-old house that she only wants to forget. she does not like ovens, either.
4. famine comes again & she is the first to go, a woman without a husband chased from their tiny village into the woods she has always feared. gretel weeps for the first time in years, & throws all her stones into the river.
5. there is a house, deep in the forest. it has been unlocked for years, ever since she was a girl, & it is the only place she can go. she plucks the milk-white bones from the oven carefully, then buries them beneath the oak tree.
6. a boy & a girl are walking down the path, hand-in-hand. gretel pulls the curtain back & stares at them, at their frayed clothing & hollow cheeks & terrified faces, & she wonders if her brother has become a woodcutter.