



## the names of the women (2019)

translated by Mara Faye Lethem

Eulàlia did tell them how the Great He-Goat's anus was so soft, tender as a newborn's from how we coddled and kissed it, and how his shaft was cold as an icicle, and I laughed and laughed and laughed, and all that laughing 'twere what got me hanged. 'Twas that laughter, like a heady venom inside me, like the witch milk from a spurge, 'tis why I remember all the things. Because the laughter was white and contagious like tickles there inside my blood and if you broke my arm, white milk would come out instead of red blood. And the laughter left me emptied. They could've saved themselves the trouble of the tortures and the rooms that stank of piss, could've saved those ropes that stretched out so long, and the wool rags full of ash, and their waiting for me to stop laughing and confess. Confess what? Laughing was a good thing, 'twas a cushion, 'twas like eating a pear, like sticking your feet into a waterfall on a summer's day. I ne'er would've stopped laughing for all the gold in the world, not for all the hurt in the world.

The laughter unhitched me from the arms and legs and hands what'd been my loyal companions till then, and from the skin I'd covered and uncovered so many times, and it washed away the pain and grief over things that men can do to you. It done emptied me out like a dunderhead, all that heeheeheehee and hahahaha, and my noggin went clong-clong with the whistling air that entered me and came out my nose and ears. The laughing left my little head clean as a walnut shell, fit to hold all the stories and all the things what we said we done, and all the things they said we done against God and Jesus and



all the saints and the Virgin. What Virgin? A god like each of their fathers, evil, evil, evil, and a torturer like them, and frightened by all the lies they'd repeated so many times they done come to believe them. For there be not a single one left on these mountains, nary a one of those who did point at us, who locked us up, who searched for the devil's mark upon us, who knotted the nooses and tightened the ropes. Because staying or not staying had nary a thing to do with the fires of hell, nor with divine punishment, nor with any faith, nor with any sorts of virtue. No. Being able to get up every morn to gather penny buns and golden chanterelles and to make piss and tell stories tis to do with the thunderclaps what befall that tree and that man. 'Tis to do with the infants born whole and the infants what aren't, and the infants born whole but with their innards not in the right places. Has to do with being the bird what the buzzard hunted or the hare the dog hunted, or not. And the Virgin and child and the demon 'twere all fashioned of the selfsame folly.

Of us all, 'tis Joana the eldest. She did come from a house nigh mine, Joana did, and everyone did know she would make cures in a cauldron, and one day she bade me join her if I so desired to learn, and if I desired to go along with her at night. And to have her teach me how to cure fevers, and inflict the evil eye and goiters, and nursling maladies and wounds and cattle diseases. And to find lost and stolen objects and cast glances. Oh, such innocence. For ere our biggest sin against God 'twas getting up every morn after they hanged us, and gathering flowers and eating blackberries.

They all left Joana be and they all did call for her when they went into labor or suffered goiters. Until that time when the hail fell heavy. Joana kept a field of wheat, and when the hail razed all the other fields, nary a hailstone fell on hers. They did say 'twas Joana had made the storm with some of her powders. Sorceress! they did yell. And then the son of her neighbor, who was called Little Joan, a five-year-old lad who was just about the first to call her sorceress, fell ill and his feet did swell purple and black, and he did expire four days later, and everyone did point at Joana, and did exclaim that she had empoisoned his victuals. Get her, get that old strumpet, that sorceress! And they did. And soon after that, little, little tiny frogs did rain down, and Joana sayeth unto them that if she so desired she could

bring on the hail, or bring down a rain of frogs, or make all their livestock die, and then they did take me also and Joana said nothing more ever again. But I was fine, for I learned to laugh.

And then Eulàlia did appear, from Tegurà de Dalt, and she did tell them how she had once gone to Andorra to unearth a dead baby and extract its lungs and liver, to make of it an unguent to kill people and livestock. And then she did tell of how she bound men so they could not lie with other women but only with their wives. Since she made six knots on the strings of their undergarments and then with every knot she did say, I bind you on behalf of God, Saint Peter and Saint Paul, and the whole heavenly court, and on behalf of Beelzebub and Tió and Cuxol, so that you cannot join carnally with any woman who be not your wife.

And once, she bound a man and a woman, who were neighbors of hers and who were cruel and threw rocks at her. She did bind them with hairs from their heads, so they couldn't copulate. And when the husband wasn't there, the woman couldn't live without him, and when he was there and wanted to come close to her, her entire body itched such as she thought she might die, and she couldn't stand to be near him. And that way four years passed. Four years! Hahaha heehee. And then one day, their son who took care of their goats brought the animals past Eulàlia's land, and Eulàlia did say oh may bad wolves devour your goats. And right then and there, a wolf pounced into his herd and killed a goat. Then they took Eulàlia, too, and when they had her, she dared tell them that one night the four of us had snatched a nursling from his mother's side, and taken him to a field, and we had played with him as if he were a ball.

Eulàlia always did tell the best stories, still does, better than anyone. Stories that make me laugh, laugh, laugh, until something loosens up inside of me, even deeper inside than the little drops of piss. She tells stories, and we are there in her stories, and verily what a joy 'tis to be there in them. Inside Eulàlia is a little voice, deep, deep inside, what tells her tales, a little voice, the devil's voice, what told her about the misdeeds, and 'twas spurred on by the pain men inflicted upon her and unleashed like a tongue what no longer knows how to lie still.



The little voice came from deep inside her own head, like a fount, springing forth with images and words.

“We entered the forest, I upon a black she-ass, and Dolceta from Can Conill”—“‘tis I!” I exclaimed—“upon a fox, and there was no moon and the stars gave nary any light, and a branch leaped out into my path verily like a claw scratching my face, and I said, ‘Jesus!’ and I fell from the she-ass, and Dolceta said, ‘Never say “Jesus” again.’ And I paid her mind. We did go to the Roca de la Mort, we did go there with our armpits smeared with an unguent that scorches the hairs forevermore, and that is why our armpits are bare. When we were there at the Rock, all of us, men and women, did mark a cross upon the ground and we did lower our skirts and we did each place our buttocks there upon the cross, forswearing faith and God. And then we did kiss the devil’s anus, one by one. And sometimes he took the form of a calico cat and sometimes of a he-goat, and he said unto us, ‘Art thou with me, my child?’ and we all did answer yes. And then we ate cheese and fruit and honey, and we drank wine, and we all joined hands, men, women, and demons, and we embraced and we kissed and we danced and we fornicated and we sang, all together.”

Margarida cried. She cried and denied everything, she cried and cried at the injustice of it all and sometimes she shrieked, and I told her, come now, Margarida, don’t cry, all four of us locked up there in the same dark cell that wasn’t even a cell, that was for holding livestock. And we made a good pair, Margarida and I, because I just laughed and laughed, and she just cried and cried, and sometimes the more she cried, the more her face contorted, and the more snot and saliva dripped from her, with her face all red and all swollen and all ugly, the more I laughed, and the more I laughed, the more she cried, and I told her, come now, Margarida, don’t cry, and we made a good pair. Margarida denied every accusation, one after the other, and the only thing she would admit to was having set the table at night. Placing the tablecloth, and bread and wine and water and a mirror, so the evil spirits could gaze upon themselves while eating and drinking, and not kill her babies. But they only need one little thing to hang you anyway.

*from When I Sing, Mountains Dance*

## el nom de las dones (2019)

N’Eulàlia els digué que el boc tenia el cul molt fi, molt fi, com el d’una criatura de bolquers, de tants petons que l’hi havíem fet, i que tenia el membre fred com un tros de gel, i a mi me va fer riure, i riure i riure, i a mi me van penjar de tant que vaig riure. I va ser pel riure, com una metzina embriagadora que se’m va ficar dintre, com la llet de bruixa de les lleteres, que recordo totes les coses. Perquè el riure, dins de la meva sang, blanc i encomanadís com les pessigolles, que si me trencaves un braç sortia llet blanca en comptes de sang vermella, me va buidar. Si se n’hagueren pogut estalviar, de tortures i d’habitacions, totes que feien pudor de pipí, i de cordes que s’estiraven llargues, llargues, i de draps de llana plens de cendra, i d’esperar que parés de riure i confessés. Confessar què? Si el riure era l’única cosa bona, era un coixí, era com menjar-se una pera, era com ficar els peus en un salt d’aigua un dia d’estiu. No haguera parat de riure ni per tot l’or del món, ni per tot el mal del món.

El riure me va desenganxar dels braços i cames i mans que m’havien acompanyat tan fidelment fins aleshores, i de la pell que havia vestit i desvestit tantes vegades, i me va rentar el mal i la pena per les coses que et poden fer els homes. Me va buidar com a una beneitona, tant de hihihhi i hahahaha, i el cap, que me feia clonc-clonc amb l’aire que xiulava quan m’entrava i em sortia pel nas i les orelles. Me va deixar el caparró com la closca d’una nou, a punt per guardar-hi totes les rondalles i totes les històries i totes les coses que els vam dir que feiem, i totes les coses que van dir que havíem fet en contra de Déu i de Jesús i de tots els sants i de la Verge. Quina Verge? Un Déu com el pare de cada un, dolent, dolent, dolent, i torturador com ells, i esporuguit de totes les mentides que, de tant dir-les, s’havien cregut. Que no se n’hi ha pas quedat cap dels que ens assenyalaren, ni dels que ens tancaren, ni dels que ens buscaren les marques de