

that chapter. She added some endearments that made me jealous: teddy bear, honeycomb. I supposed they'd come from her personal experience. Little cherry pie, I told her, softly, and leaned over her right there at the desk to nuzzle her belly button and taste her intimate raspberry that made me crazy.

Reveal your fantasies. I knew she'd read this advice in women's magazines. Dare to say dirty things, be profane. Man doesn't live by poetry alone. When I wrote that and laughed, amused, I didn't know it was my last tie with sanity and humor. After that, and after reading to Luisa what I had written and finding the dirty phrases that excited us, I entered the realm in which I'm still trapped. I would write a paragraph and try it with Luisa, crazed by her candor and willingness to experiment with everything to construct a book together. Finally I found I could no longer leave the house where I waited hungry for her caresses, her attentive listening and demands, drunk with the unstoppable writing of that amorous cookbook I didn't want to conclude. It was she who took it to the publisher and demanded that both our names appear in the contract I signed without objection. It was she who told my insistent colleagues I wasn't Adolfo Mejía, I had another job, and to please stop bothering me. The same with my sister who came to knock on the door one day; I greeted her with a slight shake of my hand from the window of my room. It was Luisa who finished the book, recapitulating the principles we had formulated over the months; it was she who signed our names and brought the photographer who took our portrait together, smiling like Johnny Cash and June Carter, and it was her love, if we must be fair, that invented a Rodolfo to her measure and caprice. A Rodolfo who once was Adolfo who wanted to demonstrate that he could make others believe happiness was possible. Because in fact he had achieved it: Luisa was immensely happy and wrote a handbook of her own.

—Translated from the Spanish by Patricia Dubrava

Mónica Lavín lives in Mexico City. She is the prolific author of short stories and story collections, including *Manual para enamorarse*, 2012, from which "Handbook for Falling in Love" comes. Her novels include *Yo, la peor*, about Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz, which won the Elena Poniatowska Prize, 2010. Lavín has also won the Gilberto Owen National Prize for Literature, among other awards.

Patricia Dubrava's translations from Spanish include stories by Mónica Lavín in *Reunion: The Dallas Review*, *KIN*, and Norton's *Flash Fiction International*, 2015. Recently, her translations have appeared in *Aldus Journal of Translation*, *Mexico City Lit*, and *Numéro Cinq*, 2016. Dubrava's translation of an Agustín Cadena story appeared in *Exchanges*, spring 2016.

LUIS BORRERO

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