

MATILDE: The story of my parents is this. It was said that my father was the funniest man in his village. He did not marry until he was sixty-three because he did not want to marry a woman who was not funny. He said he would wait until he met his match in wit.

And then one day he met my mother. He used to say: your mother--and he would take a long pause--(Matilde takes a long pause)--is funnier than I am. We have never been apart since the day we met, because I always wanted to know the next joke.

My mother and father did not look into each other's eyes. They laughed like hyenas. Even when they made love they laughed like hyenas. My mother was old for a mother. She said it took time for a woman to develop a sense of humor. She refused many proposals. It would kill her, she said, to have to spend her days laughing at jokes that were not funny. (Pause)

I wear black because I am in mourning. My mother died last year. Have you ever heard the expression: I almost died laughing? Well that's what she did. The doctors couldn't explain it. They argued, they said she choked on her own spit, but they don't really know. She was laughing at one of my father's jokes. A joke he took one year to make up, for the anniversary of their marriage. When my mother died laughing, my father shot himself. And so I came here, to clean this house.

MATILDE: This is how I imagine my parents.

My mother is about to give birth to me.

The hospital is too far away.

My mother runs up a hill in December and says: Now!

My mother is lying down under a tree.

My father is telling her a joke to try and keep her calm.

My mother laughed. She laughed so hard that I popped out.

My mother said I was the only baby who laughed when I came into the world.

She said I was laughing at my father's joke.

I laughed to take in the air.

I took in some air, and then I cried.

They sang a song to make me stop crying.

It goes like this:

I think maybe heaven is a sea of untranslatable jokes. Only everyone is laughing.