

Witches

Brenda Lozano

Heather Cleary, Translator

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In Brenda Lozano's *Witches*, an Indigenous healer tells her story to a reporter who has her own unhealed wounds.

Paloma was killed for being Muxe, a third gender recognized by the Zapotec, one of Mexico's many Indigenous groups. The two people most affected by her death are her cousin Feliciano, a renowned *curandera* who heals people from around the world, and Zoe, a journalist who feels compelled to interview Feliciano after Paloma's murder. As Feliciano's story unfolds, Zoe recalls her own past, revealing how Feliciano helped her to recognize and make peace with it.

Despite surface similarities between the women (both lost their fathers when they were young, and both had formative relationships with their younger sisters), Feliciano and Zoe lead quite different lives. Each woman tells her story in her own words: Feliciano relates hers to Zoe in rambling, lyrical sentences, showing how she applied her abilities to everyone from locals to international celebrities. Her relationship with Paloma was her guiding light from childhood, allowing her to follow in the footsteps of ancestors who were men, and who also cured others' ills. And Zoe has also seen her share of uncertainty and sorrow; she navigates her relationships with her quiet but supportive father and her troubled sister.

Regardless of public scorn and physical danger, Feliciano and Paloma defy gender norms to tread the paths they know to be right for them. They are both bound by their devotion to their crafts, and by how their unique—and, as Feliciano believes, God-given—talents help others. Their connections make their stories so powerful.

Witches is a glorious novel about gender-nonconforming people who brave a hostile world to be themselves.

EILEEN GONZALEZ (September / October 2022)

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