

SISTER'S VISIONS

English Brooks

Her eyelids were closing. It must have been the stillness in the room that made her realize. The two young elders advanced their slides across the laptop screen and it felt late. She nodded slowly. Then more quickly, attentively, to show that, no, of course she wasn't dozing off. Surely, somewhere in the mission home there was drawer, and in it, a folder with her plane ticket home for the morrow. She was alert.

She looked out across the powder blue carpeting, recently vacuumed into long backgammon patterns. What even was carpet, anyway? What was Coca-Cola anymore? Chicken cordon bleu? Automatic ice? This fireside with no fire? Outside and beyond the chain link, in the concrete and cobble streets, someone was burning a small trash pile. Cool air from the river—now coursing along under mostly paved-over canals and culverts—settled over the neighborhood. It was evening and she could smell all this. A dog barked. A bell rang.

She thought back to that village on the coast where she had first been sent. A place whose name she would always remember like it had become her own. Washing her clothes in the concrete sink, then pinning them up in the courtyard; nothing brought a storm like hanging clean laundry to dry, a stillness in the air.

That's when she had heard them. At first she had thought it was thunder, or the hammer of falling fruits against the zinc roof. But it was the Howlers, moving across the canopy through *almendros*, *mamónes*, *marañones*, and *cecropias*. Looking up, first she saw just one of them, then all of them at once. An apparition, then a family. There was a mother with a baby on her back, gripping her nape by the fur. She scanned across backlit leaves and caught the mother looking on her, her downward gaze soft, dark, and unhurried. Then the rain.

That next morning she had awoken on her back, staring down across the length of her body. No blanket or sheet—it was already hot—just her own feet there at the end of the bed. What forces had sculpted these two duendes, two gifts that at once hold us up and down? Ten glassy faces, knuckles and whorls.

Here they were now in these worn grey flats, resting vaguely over the garish blue sea spanning the room. She listened for some sign in this last devotional—world without end—but could suddenly hear nothing. It was a horsehair worm, nightmarishly fine and black as vacuum, that had come writhing out from a vent on the other side of the room. She alone saw this.

ENGLISH BROOKS has creative and scholarly work that has appeared in *Aztlán*, *Dark Mountain*, *Green Letters*, *ISLE*, *MELUS*, *Pacific Coast Philology*, *Saltfront*, *Sunstone*, *Terrain.org*, and *Western American Literature*. In the summer, he directs Birch Creek Service Ranch, where teens come to the high desert to live in yurts, work local farms, hike slot canyons, play music, chase jackrabbits, eat grasshoppers, and howl at the moon! For the rest of the year, he teaches at Snow College in central Utah.