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## ELISAVIETTA RITCHIE

## In the Village

Those crones know a thing or two. They read signs the way farmers calculate clouds, sailors decipher sunrise and stars.

Even barren, Tia Juana senses
the neighbor's child hides sudden breasts, Pedro follows her home from market.... Just before the birth, she is there.

When my mother lay down for a napshe never slept in the afternoonand I went to wake her for supper, Dolores followed me toward the bedroom.

From the far side of the threshold she knew: La senora esta muerta. I, facing age, must still learn to decipher tea leaves, new lines on my palm, your eyes.

Elisavietta Ritchie's recent books include: Elegy for the OtherWomanand Flying Time:Stories andHalf-Stories.

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