La acústica de los iglús (The Acoustics of Igloos)
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This is the first book from journalist and author Almudena Sánchez, who has previously been featured in Bajo treinta, an anthology of notable Spanish writers under 30. This very short collection contains ten surreal and dreamlike stories, largely focused from a female perspective. The settings range from contemporary to a Black Mirror style "ten-minutes-in-the-future" type of science fiction, though such futuristic elements are not the main focus of the stories. The title of the collection reflects the repeated themes of music and sounds in environments, which the characters frequently perceive as inhospitable and isolated – just like an igloo.

"Mrs. Smaig" intertwines the worlds of hospitals and zoos through the point of view of a sick girl encountering the titular Mrs. Smaig, exploring both physical and psychic pain. "The cold through the gears" follows a family whose father died in quicksand, and who now drive around aimlessly in an old van in search of solid ground. In "Notes from the celestial sphere" an underemployed philosophy graduate finds a menial job clearing trash in outer space, all the while pining after her ex-boyfriend. A girl dwelling on her parents' divorce watches a blind swimmer endlessly swim back and forth in "The swimmer of the Hotel Minerva" …

The themes that Sánchez keeps circling back to are those of solitude, alienation, and an attempt to find one's place in the world. Almost all of her narrators are girls or young women, exploring many different facets of femininity and sexuality… As the title would suggest, music and sound also play a major part in the collection, sometimes to almost synesthetic levels. Her writing is appropriately lyrical – Sánchez has a great ear for rhythm and musicality in language. A dreamlike quality permeates throughout – the collection is filled with elements of the absurd, the surreal, and the futuristic. Comparisons with Kafka and Borges are obvious, but she also shares a great deal in common with some contemporary short story writers such as Angela Readman, Can Xue, Pilar Adón, and a slightly-less-gothic Mariana Enriquez. Plot and character

development are not the focus here – rather, an exploration of moods and emotions. However, she also keeps each story well-paced and engaging – at an average of 14 pages per story, she keeps things moving and doesn't get bogged down in overly extravagant language.

Sánchez is a young writer, and many of the themes in her writing – alienation, disenchantment, a

focus on the interior life and the female perspective, may well strike a chord with millennial readers – especially women. There is nothing inherently Spanish or foreign about this collection that would have trouble being conveyed to an English speaking audience. Nor is there anything particularly regional about the language or themes – indeed, many of the stories do not even mention a setting. I could absolutely see this collection doing well with a publisher with a focus on young female voices, one who is not afraid to embrace Sánchez's unconventional, surrealist and dreamlike narratives.