

PIERRE REVERDY

FROM PAINTED STARS (ÉTOILES PEINTES, 1921)

TRANSLATED BY DAN BELLM

MOVEMENT ON THE HORIZON

The horsemen keep to the road, and in profile. One cannot tell any more how many. Against the night that blocks the way, between the river and the bridge, a weeping spring, a tree that follows you. You could watch the passing crowd and it wouldn't see you. It's a veritable army on the march, or else a dream, a background of a painting on a cloud. The child cries or sleeps. It watches or dreams. All these armies obstruct the sky. The earth shakes. The horses glide along the water; the cortège glides, too, in the water that washes away all these colors, all these tears.

THE GLASS KEY

Holes in the wall, holes in the chimney and in my pipe. In the corner, two walking-sticks fight in X formation. Who will pick them up? There's no one at the table, no one on the bed; the armchairs are empty. Someone wants to get out. But I'm not the one who blew out the lamp, and those are not my footsteps coming down the stairs. What if there's also a dead man in the house!

THE MIRROR OF INK

The stars coming out of the hearth are more red. The head bows rather close to the flue that seems to be its neck, and those behind watch in the mirror. Mild evening air blows in and out of the bedroom. The country folk and their animals are gone. But the painted scene remains, and the meadow that recalls the summer when night never wanted to fall because no fires were lit. Isn't the night the winter itself, floating over the chimney-tops?

ALL IS SLEEPING

The tree of the evening, the shade of the lamp, and the key of rest. Everything trembles when the door opens without awakening a sound. The white ray passes through the window and floods the table. A hand reaches through the shadow, the light, the paper on the table. It's to pick up the lamp, the wide-spreading tree, the hot star escaping. One breath sweeps it all away, snuffs out the flame, and pushes back the ray of light. There's nothing more to be seen but the dark night and the wall that holds up the house.