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Vertigo
Jean Tardieu

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VERTIGO

At an adolescent age, reputed to be a happy one, I encountered something more frightening than the unknown or death: it was the indiscernible, a huge ocean of all things, churning until it took on the opaque color of absence.

This absence, even from afar, burnt. As soon as it appeared, I instinctively moved away.

For days, I had to re-learn to make distinctions in our language, our own, the living one. Patiently, I enumerated the tiles, the roof, the branch, the floor, the lamp, the table. But, for a long time, I did not dare to name the hand: it meant restating the whole question, and again, the vertigo!

From *La part de l'ombre*

Translated from the French by **James Vladimir Gill**