**Anton Voyl n’arrivait pas à dormir. Il alluma. Son Jaz marquait minuit vingt.**

In a crisis of insomnia / Incurably insomniac / With symptoms of insomnia / In a fit of insomnia / Tossing and turning in his bunk, Anton Vowl turns on a light. [No Participles/Past Simple- what to do? Present simple or continuous/progressive forms “is going”]

According to / Judging by his Jaz watch it’s 12.20.

**Il poussa un profond soupir, s’assit dans son lit, s’appuyant sur son polochon.**

With a profound/loud/languorous sigh, Vowl sits up, propping his back up against a cushion/pillow/quilt.

**Il prit un roman, il l’ouvrit, il lut; mais il n’y saisissait qu’un imbroglio**

Vowl picks up a book / his whodunit, flicks through it, scans a paragraph or two ; but finding it too difficult to follow / impossibly difficult / its plot too chaotic to follow

**confus, il butait à tout instant sur un mot dont il ignorait la signification.**

and with an ungraspably tricky word constantly tripping him up / judging its vocabulary not worth struggling with / much too difficult /tricky / infuriatingly polysyllabic,

**Il abandonna son roman sur son lit.**

Vowl discards his book on his bunk / throws it away / drops it / puts it down in disgust.

**Il alla à son lavabo; il mouilla un gant qu’il passa sur son front, sur son cou.**

Padding into his bathroom/ Walking to his washbasin, Vowl dabs at his brow and throat with a damp cloth.

**Son pouls battait trop fort. Il avait chaud. Il ouvrit son vasistas, scruta la nuit.**

Blood is racing through his body much too fast. Vowl looks out of his small window /fanlight.

**Il faisait doux. Un bruit indistinct montait du faubourg.**

It’s a warm night. An indistinct murmur/buzz is drifting up / buzzing up from his borough.

**Un carillon, plus lourd qu’un glas, plus sourd**

Not far off, a church clock startschiming – (3 rings) [No Comparative!] as mournful/sad as a last post [glas : cloche pour annoncer la mort d’un fidèle : bugle call for military funerals], as

**qu’un tocsin, plus profond qu’un bourdon, non loin, sonna trois coups.**

dull as an alarm, as striking/profound as an [grosse cloche = tenor bell] SOS signal/baritonal toll.

**Du canal Saint-Martin, un clapotis plaintif signalait un chaland qui passait.**

A faint lapping sound informs him /signals that a small craft/ship/boat (~~barge~~) is navigating / passing through Canal Saint-Martin / a canal in his vicinity.

**Sur l’abattant du vasistas, un animal au thorax indigo, à l’aiguillon safran,**

Crawling across his windowsill is a tiny animal, indigo of thorax, saffron of sting / indigo and saffron in colour,

**ni un cafard, ni un charançon, mais plutôt un artison, s’avançait, traînant**

not a cockroach, not a ~~weevil/beetle~~ blowfly, but a kind of (insecte qui attaque le bois = ~~mite, flea~~) wasp, laboriously dragging

**un brin d’alfa. Il s’approcha, voulant l’aplatir d’un coup vif, mais l'animal**

a sugar crumb along with it (brin = ~~piece, blade; Esparto, halfah grass)~~. Hoping to crush it with a quick blow, Vowl lifts up his hand,

**prit son vol, disparaissant dans la nuit avant qu’il ait pu l’assaillir.**

but it abruptly flaps its wings, flying off without giving its assailant an opportunity to do it any harm / without its assailant doing it any harm.

Georges Perec, *La Disparition*, 1969

GEORGES PEREC (1936 - 1982) was the author of *Vie: Mode d’Emploi*, *Life A User's Manual*. His output is bewilderingly varied in form and style: it was his aim to write every kind of work that it is possible to write in the modern world without doing the same thing twice. He composed crossword puzzles and poetry, radio plays and a book on the game of Go, essays and palindromes, autobiography (W or The Memory of Childhood) and straight narrative, such as

Things, his prize-winning first novel. After writing La Disparition (A Void), he took all his unused e's and devoted them to a short text, Les Revenentes, in which e is the only vowel employed.