

Silent Night

Rethabile Masilo

– for Janice Rice

And then night becomes silent, minutes before
the uncertainty of what conduct to adopt,
right near a midnight wearing the tireless look
of care in its eyes. And then a soul that is propped

against a pillow is being read to, by a heart
that pauses, stands, and boils water to see to tea;
there's always something here, something afoot
at the bedside of evening, some outside esprit

of nighttime, not of day, some sense of farewell,
till time finally pushes its door wide open
and footsteps steal from the room, and every
person is grief-eaten, and in the end no one

is not ready, so that even the horses cannot stop
tugging at their breeches as they begin to neigh
pain and, in a display of their approval, stars
start illuminating the road onto the freeway

out of there, like streetlights on Main Street
when the sun is going, even if folks still need
to get where they're headed, and all sounds
cease, and the horses gallop to their full speed.

