

'A High of Zero'
Poetry to the Twelve months

by
Herb Hopkins



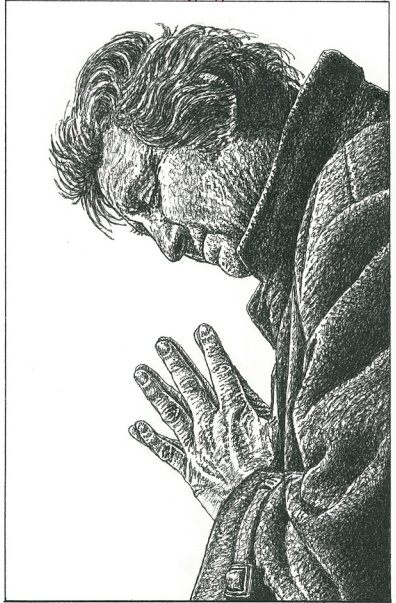
Scribe, Artist & Confidant B.W. Chubb

First day of January to the
last day of December

Anno Domini 2007

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Bound by the Author

Author Drawing by Tom Chubb



esto perpetua

Dedication

To my Family

Jan, Katie & Nicholas

and to my wonderful mother

Helem Jeanne Hopkins

Preface

Five factors gave rise to this project: my retirement from three decades of teaching • the 'salt-and-fresh' and verse of the Witless Bay barrens • a winter trip to Florida • my experiment with intricate wood-carving and the guidance and expertise of my good friend Boyd Shubb

However, it was my winter trip to Florida that allowed me an external perspective of my home, St. John's, Newfoundland. Even under the blazing sun and with cold beer, something was amiss - not something overt but rather something very subtle & mysterious. I realized that I was missing, in a strange sort of way, the calamity of winter. Would I trade the pool, shorts and sunshine... absolutely not... but something was truly lost

Upon my return to St. John's, I decided to investigate through poetry the essence of the 12 calendar months - how we play them and how they play us. But, most importantly, this work tries to imagine what each month means to me and by extension, what it might mean to all those living north of the forty-ninth

January - Janus;

A

our day of promise
and sky of fire &
the song and cheer
foreboding dire

fired of games
the feigning fun
The childish guise
of lost and won

It's started again,
platitudes and news
fought in trenches
with coffee and blues

Candles eluded
the cardboard wake
But Bibles bound
for another break

Like Empires past
their inevitable fall
You've made me grand
and yet so small

A time to begin
with hands so cold
But fire asunder
in this womblike moutd



February • Februarius



Smitten by your purity
and luring the ages
but in your rage
tossing rough-necks
like leaves

You, restless digger of graves
with spade and frigid heart
I walk with you, and watch you
and feel your comfort,
thick
within your tempest

And yet,
the idyllic maple
wears your coat of diamonds
like a slender starlet
playing to thousands
and breaking inside

Ah, February,
you give me life
but you too will pass
as the
beating heart
and coiled bodies
recover their
silent love



March, Martias



The people resent you
You hold out as
the great emancipator
but deliver not
With your ideo^s, hares & brushes^s
I should find your solace
but in your madness
you send me away to icy caverns
I banish you
and you laugh like an evil fester
And what is this about lions & lambs
What nonsense
You are a scavenger beneath the
hungry moon
pouncing on the next victim
taking bodies & minds to your darkened den
leaving them only to worry under broken ice
and the broken spirit
March, you are still winter
colder than a mansion of lost love
your vicious bite
dazed by an affair of strayed warmth
escaping into spring
leaving hope
while you fight alone
like a weary child,
sinking
in the tired, black snow



April Aprils



Ballerinas and marionettes,
tangos and pirouettes;
splendid April spin and spin
gripping life thick within
Embroidered smiles, shrouded sorrow
forever lasting, til tomorrow
open windows, daydream highs,
nameless voices, inhaled skies

Then black, the skies do often stay,
turned with slurs of hanging grey—
the talk revolt alive and well

Of fog and snow some secret spell

Titanic ships of human will
quietly lay from nature's kill
The rising past beneath us show
the filth and faith of times ago

I do not see your April cruel
then maybe I'm some April fool—
seduced by your crocus ploy

flirting, luring and playing coy



May - Maia's

Uour smell, a smile a moment brings
daylight naps in infant spring
but like a river runs to the sea
I feel your rush inside of me

Your buds softly perfect bloom
like breasts exposed that sweetly loom
for tender brush or gentle breeze
or shiving knight from gallows seize

Oh May, you are almost there
half way to and from despair
Mothers wait their quiet yield
as Fathers walk upon the field
The clattering souls in cities meet
cafe smells invade the street
Lovers lock their past decline
on checkered cloths, immersed in wine

But even still, your angst remains
skies of drizzle, fog & rain
summer dresses held at hand
as workers gather upon the strand



June - Junias



weet June,
your shyness
we admire you so
if only for your name
and infinite balance
You are the chosen one
most likely to succeed

But as always
others will rise unforeseen
forgetting you
while buskers play
and count nickels
on Bank steps;
and on life's last tour
the counted fallen
named again,
while tiny voices
count thousands
in a silent quest
for home

Filling my eyes,
your blossoms green
as pink tulips laugh
and secrets unfold
like white petals;
while aching hearts
explore gardens
for signs
in the
sacred earth



July - Julius

Uou're the heartless one
with thick disguise
and fickle stride
here and gone
like wanton sailors
As fingered ringlets curl
an osprey strikes
spitting blood
like the setting sun
and trumpets play
as I walk the streets
while zealots worship
the beguiling light
greeting passers
but turning
from broken mounds
Songbirds sing above
the shimmering spaw'n
and still
people trek
across nations
— only to find
the Great Wall
within themselves
returning strangers
to their own homes
where gardens
shelter souls
in the golden dawn



August Augustas



Painted swirls
in looking-glass water
filling the heavens
like the Aurora
while sprawling clematis rapture
touches the Milky Way
as honey-suckle daydreams
take me places
where only the
wide, wild eyes of firestorms
can see

But rumours fly
on your cool, veiled winds
of insurrection and change
of repose and duty
and of unknown roads
that lead to filled Temples
where great sages
speak only what they know
of eclipses and truth
of falling stars and Kings
of waning moons & summer love
But to speak of you
few words could tell
of your smile
and your silent song
for you are August



September • Septembres

Uour slow descent
to scarlet hues;
Your stoic face
the secret muse
How could she know
that trees would weep
of floating tapestries
before the sleep
And mothers stay
while letting go
untying knots
from long ago
And quilts return
to the free retreat
The days now short
of indiscreet

But cool and bare your temptress bliss
your raking nails & September kiss
Your smell and taste like rippling creek
your gentle bite across my cheek
And in an instant
the weightless strolls
captivè now in time-clock roles
Crossing halls
in the line
picked like berries
from the vine



October • Octobres

Like a frail finch
I hold my hand to you—
your golden crown;
your lamented fame

Then,
as if

a renaissance,
you fly away
over autumn fields
and Indian summers

But you
like everything else
are only a message
passing the
crystal heavens
and painted forests

Then
like a heavy cloud
the sky releases you
The swirling wind
your only friend
and like an omen
I sense your wail

If only
I could fly
I would die
with you



November · Nobembres



Just another
unsung hero
in frozen ground
and a high of zero
Shadowed on sides
of glut and glory
and

little white lies
in the human quarry,

I saw it coming
like a cloud of breath

the broken limbs
the smell of death

the empty spaces

the Dingy dark

the tired lovers

miles apart;

the battered-down

the barren walk

the merchant chant

the double talk

You are alone

among your kin

you run so hard

but never win



December - Decembres



nsure, I scour the plan

The adorned leader

riding high

behind the troops;

lanyards glistening

and like a ghost

appearing

and disappearing through the squall

But, what of your flock

their causeless meander; the endlessness

Set them free

with pockets full of empty spirit

They will return to fight again

while the broken and the meek

lie alone

like a child's dream

But maybe

in a gentle flurry

the Prince of Peace

could guide us

in his torn robe

saying nothing

giving nothing

only silence

the first

and

perfect gift





finis