

A Round of the Seasons – La ronde des saisons

Pierrette Requier

January drives
a team of strong
sweaty horses
hauls a heavy load,
holds summer's
sumptuous cargo safe
under a well-secured
tarp, and pulls
it through
a narrow
icy track,
inching
up a long hill,
steady, sure
steady steady
over the crest
of the new year.
January pulls
the golden thread
of summer
through the eye
of the needle.

In February we are surprised by a miraculous sun.

February comes
from the night
who-hooting
and round-eyed
like the owl
and insists
that we unclench
the fist of winter,
empty our eyes of
its dark slow
molasses,
loosen our jaw,
open our mouth
and let the
Oh's and Ah's
spill out
as laughing
Water
Gurgles
Into gutters.

Then comes March!

March

is in between,
an adolescent.

March
doesn't know
if it's coming
or going,
is moody.

Tries on
different
outfits
for effect.

Struts her stuff
then stomps off.

Slams her
bedroom door
and doesn't
come out
for days.

March
sleeps in
a lot.

Gets her
own way.

Avril nous arrive
les poches vides,
la tuque toute de travers,
maigre,, crasseuse et affamée.
Elle enlève son vieux manteau
d'hiver et ses mitaines trouées,
s'assoit le visage au soleil.
s'endort près du potager.
Avril rêve d'odeurs, d'humus,
de soupe aux légumes,
de salades fraîches,
de fines herbes.
persil, romarin, thym,
basilic, estragon, sarriette
sauge, marjolaine, origan

April arrives
toque askew
glassy-eyed,
grungy,
starved
and stunned.
She has fasted
too long.
Still wearing
her winter coat,
her bony fingers poke
out of frayed sleeves
and old mitts.
She pulls out
her empty pockets
flops by the garden,
collapses into deep
sleep and dreams
of green shoots
rising, reaching.

May unravels
snow's white
threads,
tears winter's
old linen for rags,
reaches for
her remnant bag,
arranges and
rearranges
swatches of
greens
dandelion yellow
crocus violet
rhubarb red
apple blossom pinks.
She sits at
her sewing machine,
finishes the crazy quilt
she began to dream
all winter.

En mai pendant que l'étoffe effilochée
de la neige fond en lambeaux
de vieux linge sale—
panse les déchirures de l'hiver.
Une femme se rassoit, finit
de piquer la courtepointe
fleurie qu'elle a rêvé pendant
la grande saison blanche.

June and July

June marries July.
Together
they
make hay
while the
sun shines!

June's perfume
annoints
July's colours
O Song of Songs!

Juin et juillet

Les parfums
de juin
se marient
aux couleurs
de juillet
Ô
Cantique des cantiques

August Wind
and leaves
knit sound surges
like ocean waves,
weave in
long strands
of cool
morning air.
Mid afternoon
very pregnant
August
naps.
Late in the day
she waddles
toward
the ninth month.

September

Garlands
her hair
in greens, golds,
copper, maroon,
wears outrageous
orange leotards,
shows off
her costume
jewelry.

On her arms
jingle
bangles,
on her ears,
baubles.

She clothes herself
in layered skirts
and a tweed jacket,
adds fur accents
over old lace,
dons her good
leather boots,
goes out
on the town,
paints it red.

October

is the end
of a chapter
the last line
of a an erotic poem
a blank page
the smell
just before
the first
snow
falls,
the white
stillness.

November

is the sound
of an axe,
the brittle
crack of
splitting
kindling,
a cord of wood,
a tracery of bare
branches against
sky.

Magpie's
black and
white,
her cry.

En décembre

bougie à la main
la suppliante
lance des prières
contre la verrière bleue
du long crépuscule.
À l'aube elle
Préparera la fête.

December looks
at dawn and dusk
through
a stained glass window,
hurls prayers
toward the dying flame.
She garbs herself
in green boughs,
red berries,
glitter and tinsel.
December hangs
her mini lights
and waits
by the mouth
of the cave,
shivering.

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In deep gratitude for having been granted the honour of reading tonight, I would like to end with a river poem written (in English, French and Cree) en plein air, overlooking the North Saskatchewan River, appreciating that I am here because in 1914, my immigrant grand parents arrived West on the river, and that before" us" first nations People had been here for ages.

An Incantation for *The North Saskatchewan River* –

La rivière Nord Saskatchewan - Kiskiskâciwani-sipiy

Make of your life a love - Sâki hi tôh tâ tâ
Because the moon - à cause de la lune - Tip'skaw pîsim
Because the valley - la vallée - wâyatînâw
Because the banks - la rive - 'soné sîpî
Because the river - la rivière - osam sîpî
The skin of the water - Tah koh tahi pêkohk
The shimmering, the silver, they came – wâsinko pîwâpisko takô
Because the moon – la lune argentée - tipskâw pîsim

Recites all the rhythms – la lune – Nâspihitôhtâtâ
Recycles, recycles, remembers – la lune –
Wâsakâ, wâsakâ, kiskisô

On the path of the shimmering, the silver –
Wâsihko pîwâpisko mēskanasis
On the skin of the water, they came –
Tahkoh tahi pêkohk takôwak
Because the river carries and drifts -
Because the banks settle and shift -
Because the valley carved, called - Ils sont venus
Because the moon, still they come - Encore et encore - Ils viennent...
Recite all the rhythms
Recycle, recycle, recall

Because of the moon - la lune - Tip'skaw pîsim
Because of the valley - la vallée - wâyatînâw
Because of the banks – la rive - 'soné sîpî
Because of the river – la /notre rivière - osam sîpî
The skin of the water - Tah koh tahi pêkohk
The shimmering, the silver – la lune argentée – wâsinko pîwâpisko takô
Make of this place a viable dream.
Make of your life a love - Sâki hi tôh tâ tâ

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- Oral Trilingual – English, French, Cree - Presentation on Feb. 2, 2017 with Jerry and Jo-Ann Saddleback