

# A Beast of a Year<sup>1</sup>

By Chris McDonnell

Back gone in 68  
Time long ago

January 30<sup>2</sup>

From country into city  
came the small-framed men  
from the North, breaking  
the armed circle of confidence.

April 4<sup>3</sup>

On an open motel balcony  
they gathered, pointing towards  
some distant source that dropped a man  
whose words echo still.

June 5<sup>4</sup>

Down on the hotel kitchen floor  
life fast-faded with the  
fallen frame of the Candidate  
cradled in caring arms.



**Chris McDonnell**

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**Chris McDonnell** retired in 2002 as a headteacher. His writing has appeared frequently in the *Seasonal*, as well as in other collections both in the UK, Ireland and America. He lives in Staffordshire in the Midlands of England.

August 21<sup>5</sup>

Spring ended in late Summer  
as streets of a city sang  
to the steel of tracked machines  
and a dream destroyed.

December 10<sup>6</sup>

In the East the monk  
from the West spoke of structures,  
disappeared for a coke or something  
and left in silence.

December 24<sup>7</sup>

The white Advent Moon listened  
to a Genesis reading from earth men  
speaking of Creation from their small  
and lonely space, and did not respond.

Back gone  
then  
in 68  
All now a  
time  
long ago  
full spent

1. Thomas Merton, *The Other Side of the Mountain: The End of the Journey. Journals, vol. 7: 1967-1968*, ed. Patrick Hart (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1998): "It is already a hard year, and I don't know what else is coming, but I have a feeling it is going to be hard all the way and for everybody" (44 [January 21, 1968]); "And it [MLK death] finally confirmed all the apprehensions – the feeling that 1968 is a beast of a year" (78 [April 6, 1968]).
2. The start of the Tet Offensive in South Vietnam.
3. The assassination of Martin Luther King in Memphis.
4. The assassination of Robert Kennedy in California.
5. The Soviet invasion of Prague.
6. The death of Thomas Merton in Bangkok.
7. The first circumnavigation of the moon, Apollo 8.