

Sex, death and tears

The Year of Cancer

HUGO CLAUS

'The Year of Cancer' is the love story of Pierre, a suave young man from the insurance and banking world, and Toni, a simple and somewhat unstable beautician working in show business. She is no beauty, but her imperfections are in fact what causes Pierre to fall for her. She awakens sadness and tenderness within him, but she is also a stranger whose reticence annoys and confuses him. Toni has a child with another man, whom she eventually abandons in favour of Pierre. When Pierre fails to satisfy Toni sexually, the couple gradually drift apart, until the inevitable break-up follows. But even that doesn't stop the back and forth of attraction and rejection.

An intensely-painted picture of love

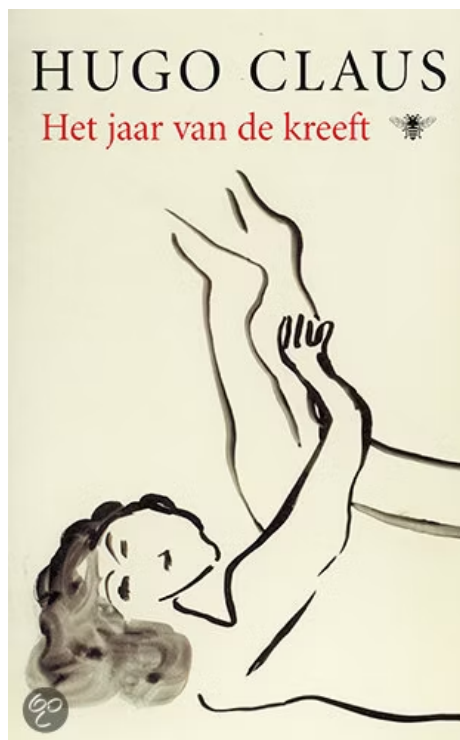
HET NIEUWSBLAD

Pierre continues to read Toni's horoscope, Cancer. A couple of years later, he is called to her sickbed. She has been diagnosed with the disease – and the prognosis is terminal. After this experience, his life will be controlled by her forevermore.

Claus' intense and nuanced writing style and the psychologically-balanced dialogue make 'The Year of Cancer' a convincing story of psychological confusion and an all-consuming love, doomed to fail.

With frightening precision, 'The Year of Cancer' sums up just how ugly love can be

DE MORGEN



AUTHOR



Hugo Claus (1929-2008) is Flanders' most famous and most important writer of modern literature. He is internationally acclaimed for his plays, novels and poetry. In his Faulknerian novels, he mixes expertly crafted stories of post-war Flanders with poignant character portraits and telltale allusions to mythology. *Photo © Stephan Vanfleteren*

ORIGINAL TITLE Het jaar van de kreeft (1972, De Bezige Bij. Latest edition 2017, 288 pp.)

PRIZES Constantijn Huygens Prize, Grand Prize for Literature

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