

Virus Vigil

Poetry by Jim Blackburn  
Art by Isabelle Scurry Chapman



THE INCREDIBLE  
JOURNEY

**Black-chinned Hummingbird 2**

On the asphalt road that leads to Deer Lake  
It's July 4<sup>th</sup> and the Hill Country's abake,  
But it's early morning and things are ok  
All signs are pointing this will be a good day.

The yucca bloom stands firm and tall  
It could barely fit inside a large hall  
And at the top are the dainty white flowers  
How does it stand without special powers?

And then hell breaks out atop the plant  
Two fierce warriors seeking the other to supplant  
There's a feint to the left and jab to the right  
I've got a front-row view of a pretty good fight.

The winner returns to light on the bloom  
But looking paranoid, foreseeing its doom  
For the defeated invader is plotting strategy  
He's planning another assault and battery.

They continue this way even though there is space  
For the two of them but it must mean disgrace  
To share a plant with another hummingbird  
It's apparently necessary to have the last word.

And later I see a black-chin at the lake

His thirst for nectar he's trying to slake  
With the nice white flowers out in the water  
And here comes another intent on manslaughter.

It's a warring world for the black-chinned hummer  
One might think their life would be a bummer  
But they seem content with this way of existence  
Or else they'll learn to keep their distance.

And from what I have read about the hummers  
It makes no difference if its his or hers  
For their metabolic rate requires they protect  
The bits of nectar that they detect.

So welcome to Earth church  
Pull yourself up a pew  
The service will conclude  
With some nectar for you.

### The Black-Chinned Hummingbird 3

In the Hill Country on Deer Lake  
In the early summer.

The lake is full for it has rained,  
Returning life to the parched, dry terrain,  
The hardscrabble scrub forest is returning green,  
Bringing flow to the creeks and seeps and springs.

I shout cause I'm happy - absolutely joyful,  
The trees are singing and the birds are hopeful,  
The side of the lake is lined with plants,  
Pushing up through blue water like Lancelot's lances.

Green stalks and leaves provide a platform  
For small white blossoms that are like a swarm,  
Presided over by the fairy of the lake,  
The hummingbird moving with a thirst to slake.

The little hummer darts from bloom to bloom,  
Dropping in for a short stay and moving on,  
Then flitting twenty feet to the next blooming target,  
Wings abuzz as it crosses the lovely white carpet.

Moving up and down and all around  
It really appears to be tightly wound,

Dashing up to repel an intruding hummer,  
Oh my, that black chin is a real stunner.

On the lake in my kayak I am at peace,  
For I have had a psychological release  
A visit to Earth Church that cannot be beat  
In central Texas in the time of the heat