



The Black-Crowned Night Heron

It is late evening on Christmas Bay
On the longest day of the year.

Paddling past the rookery,
The black crowned night herons
Are becoming active,
Moving about shadow-like
Among the branches,
Anticipating another night of foraging
In the Spartina marsh
Under the lights in the black sky
That are beginning to emerge
As the sun leaves behind the dark.

Slow paddling and thinking –
Brain time - reflecting
On the stars sending lumens
From millions of light years away,
Light that I see today,
Evidence of what was
A million light years ago,
Stars once alive, burning,
Stars that I believe I see
But yet may be no more.

The night heron flies overhead,
A darker shade of dark

Revealed before the flickering lights,
Reminding me of what is real,
And that what I know is now.
I know that at this moment,
She and I are together
In time and space -
At this moment,
She and I are both alive.

And beyond that
On a good day like today
She helps me understand
That I need to know no more.

Poetry by Jim Blackburn
Art by Ursula Scurry Chapman



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At the rookery on South Blvd
In the spring of the virus.

The birds have come back to South Blvd
To nest for another year
The night herons attending to building a nest
And broadcasting a call for all to hear.

To find the herons I look to the ground
And seek out the patches of white,
The evidence left of life being lived,
A coming together where the conditions are right.

The birds have established a home for while
A place to rear their youngsters,
Keeping a watch for the wily crows -
Notorious raiders and would-be pranksters.

Walking amongst the oaks and birds,
I smile as I take it all in
As darkness comes, the herons fly off
Seeking frogs and escaping the din.

I tip my cap to my black-crowned friends
For they have a stable community
Unlike my own that has been disrupted

By a virus for which we have no immunity.

Just think about how our foundations were shaken
By an attack from another vector,
No nuclear bomb, no terrorist attack,
Just a microbial marauder, a horrible specter.

I smile as I walk back to our social apartness
And think of the millions living like us,
And the black crowns whisper as they depart
That we humans do have too much hubris.

So welcome to Earth Church
Pull yourself up a pew
Say a prayer for community
And for yourself too.