Virus Vigil

Poetry by Jim Blackburn
Art by Isabelle Scurry Chapman

The Redhead

At Port Mansfield wade fishing in the fall,
The stillness surrounds me, embracing me,
The light wind barely rippling the laguna,
The quiet disrupted only by the whirr
Of my reel as I fish the edge of the island
Where bright green sea grass
Comes near the surface,
Grass revealed by the rays from the orange globe
Rising slowly over the sand dunes of Padre Island,
Emerald green habitat for crabs and shrimp,
A perfect dining spot for trout and reds.

The blue-tipped tails appear as lace flippers
Emerging from the shallows near the edge,
Casually moving from side to side,
Inviting me to try my luck.

The line spools off the reel
As the rod catapults the imitation lure close,
And then BAM,
Experiencing the power of the strike,
Pulling, feeling and then losing the swift redfish,
And in frustration I turn to the heavens,
Where three redheaded ducks flare away
From the sudden movement and likely curse,
Flaring to rise up before me –

The red brilliant against the clear blue sky,
So clear – so bright – so perfect.

Years later I close my eyes
And there they are,
The redheads and the tailing redfish,
Captured forever in my mind
Where they remain to be pulled out
On a virus day when I need a lift.