Virus Vigil

Poetry by Jim Blackburn
Art by Isabelle Scurry Chapman

IT IS RECKLESS
TO KEEP ME IN IT
AND BURY ME IN ITS
BITES.

EVEN IF THUS
DISARRAY
PULLS THE
OTHER
NO POLE
TO ITS
CURRENT
OUT OF
US.

IF THIS
OUT OF
YOU
YOURSELF
YOURSELF.
The Cardinal 2

In Wimberley
In the Texas Hill Country
On a bright spring day.

I have just stopped running
And am collating the thoughts
That course through my head
As I try to find the right way to
Speak to an audience of friends
And interested persons about
My spiritual self.

The trees have painted the hills
With the hues of early spring green.
The flowers are blooming
Purple, yellow, blue and orange,
Welcoming the bees to come
And take what they both need.

And then a song pierces the landscape,
A song of joy,
A song of celebration,
A song of life
Followed shortly by the red flash
Of the male cardinal and his mate
Moving through the trees,
Two living things living life.

This is Earth Church.
This is what it is about –
The songs of birds,
The hues of living plants,
The dashing lizard, the circling hawk.
This is my church
And I am attending services.
And they leave me
Peaceful, easy, present.

And I know what to say
For this is where my spirit resides.
Cardinal

I know someone who of the cardinal speaks
In negative terms about their beaks
But why would a person think like this
Of a bird that generally brings great bliss?

She looks up at me with a fixed glare
Trying to determine - does she really care
What I think about her cardinal confession
Or perhaps she’s worried about my discretion?

And she then offers the following explanation
Of the chain of events that are linked to causation
Of her strong reservations of this lovely red bird
But more logical words I have seldom heard.

“Have you ever banded the birds of the forest
And caught them in the net called the mist?”
“‘Well”, she continues "Now I’m telling the truth –
After the encounter you’ll need gin and vermouth”.

“You’ll watch as the beak that the Cardinal possesses,
Upon your finger, it attaches and then presses,
And the beak of the cardinal will dig in deep,
And I defy you to take it and not make a peep.”

So all bird-banders out there you must beware –
That the Cardinal’s a bird to approach with care.
For a red ball of fury is in your future
And for your finger – perhaps a suture.

So, the beak of the cardinal is something to fear
Respect it, salute it and don’t it go near,
And love that cardinal as from a distance you watch
The lovely red bird with the regal topnotch.