

## Perennials

Cyndi gave me lilies  
(dug from an abandoned Texas farmhouse  
by her Eternal Eagle Scout husband),  
winter-hardy Naked Ladies,  
that sprout greedy leaves in spring,  
Slender tongues of green  
that lick the sunlight, hoard it, and die,  
and in July, sudden stalks of  
tissue-paper pink blossoms  
shoot from the earth,  
like Fourth-of-July rockets,  
blowing raspberries at the brutal Oklahoma summer.

Margo's mint grows on the retaining wall.  
It escaped from the bed where it was planted,  
and runs wild in my back yard,  
with the now-free-range garlic  
that came from my bushy-browed, goofy-grinned neighbor,  
who grows organic vegetables  
and plans to live to 100.

My husband, who sleeps late,  
mows in the heat of the day,  
and sits with a cold beer in the shade,  
dug the iris beds,  
bright oases of color  
in our casually chaotic yard.  
Carole gave me the pale-yellow irises,  
buttery-soft like her gentle heart.  
The purple-crayon irises came from Louise,  
symbols of a passionately faithful friendship.

In my front beds are Lenten Roses  
from Stella's British back garden.  
They share the soil with indestructible violets  
and Lily-of-the-valley,  
slender stems of tiny, white bells, and glossy leaves.  
Scotty and I dug those early bloomers  
from the loamy soil of her Dallas home.  
She is gone now,  
boarding a small boat for eternity.  
The current has swept her beyond my view,  
but her flowers remain, binding her heart to mine,  
and the dark leaves reach out like arms to hold me.

Like the violets and irises, I've given away,  
these small scraps of life,  
fragments of generosity,  
are verdant satin ribbons –  
living bonds that tie me,  
runner and root, to others,  
gossamer green threads weaving a web,  
to catch me when I trip and tumble to the earth.

In the end, we will all pass  
like the lilies of the field.  
But until then, until then,  
before we all board small boats for the horizon,  
we share our plants instead,  
and our souls are bound together,  
till we slip beyond the line  
where the sea swallows the sun.