

Palliative Care

Category: Poems

written by Stacy Nigliazzo | March 8, 2013

Stacy Nigliazzo

When I cut the stem
I knew it was just a matter of time.

I cleared the sill
and filled a crystal vase.

The petals unfurled.
The smell of summer pierced my skin

for three days.
When the first leaf fell

I added lemon pulp and crushed
an aspirin;

cut away all that waned—
the shoots were spry

one last day.
I scattered them over green earth.

Flecks of pollen
stained my lips and cheekbones.

About the poet:

Stacy Nigliazzo is an ER nurse. Her poems have appeared in [Pulse](#), [JAMA](#), [Bellevue Literary Review](#) and the *Cancer Poetry Project* (second edition), and an upcoming book of her poetry will be published this fall by [Press 53](#) (North Carolina). She is a graduate of Texas A&M University and a recipient of the Elsevier Award for Nursing Excellence.

About the poem:

“I was arranging a vase of Stargazer lilies when it occurred to me that they began the process of dying as soon as they were cut. I worked diligently to keep them alive and was reminded of how challenging it can be to care for a dying patient. This poem is a celebration of that role.”

Poetry editors:

Johanna Shapiro and Judy Schaefer