

Poetry Porch: Poetry

Red Lilies: A Still-Life

By William Doreski

Red lilies in a vase declare
themselves with painful voices.

The table on which they squat
looks as shaky as something painted

by Matisse in his foulest moods.
But you aren't a painted figure.

With prim mockery you feign
a pose that lacks poise, a shy
creature concealing rugged claws.
Last night Beth the cat hooked my thumb

in play. The pain was exquisite,
threading up my arm to settle

in the forecourt of my brain.
As I washed the wound a picture

of red lilies on a table formed
that by the next day, today,

had completed itself with you.
Christmas day, cold enough for good

King Wenceslaus to do his deed.
The snow slouches like a huddle

of delinquents. The light arises
with reluctance. You remain

seated by the table of lilies
although their outrageous red

puzzles you. How did I dream up
such palpable flowers and place

their vulgarity on a table
that wasn't here a day ago?

You as well as I project
a still life we saw in a book.

If you rise from your chair, you'll shatter
the illusion, and the red lilies

will scatter like embers fresh
from the stove, good for melting ice.