

## The Thorns Have Been Removed

The crimson petals,  
ingrained with veins,  
curve and wrap  
around each other.

Twenty-two resplendent layers  
embrace to make the rose blossom.

The lime green stem extends down  
to where leafy arms hang  
around the lip of the vase,  
its crystal cross,  
on my office desk.

The flower is stunning and fragrant  
and yet ...

every knuckle's length apart  
around the stubbornly verdant stem  
is a scab,  
where a thorn had been shorn  
and thrust away.

The thorns have all been removed.

It hurts me to look.  
Oh, but look!  
The executioner missed one,  
a defiant dagger, hiding there, just below a leaf.

It is secure, and pink, and sharp,  
pointing downward like a falcon's beak,  
poised to protect the flower  
from the one that amputated it  
and brought it to my desk.

Wanting to console it,  
I press the flesh of my finger into the barb  
until there is a stab of pain,  
and a droplet of blood  
as rich and red as the blossom itself.

Why fear this pain?

Isn't pain as much a part of the rose  
as beauty and perfume?  
Was it not this prick,  
that reminded Paul  
of what was sufficient for him?  
Was it not these thorns,  
that pierced my Lord  
just before he was redeemed?