

## CHRYSANTHEMUM LEAVES

At twenty, I would not have spared this small pot  
of withered chrysanthemums. At forty,  
I would have breathed *thank you*  
before dumping it in the trash.  
Today, I snip bald heads and ruined spangles  
from life that remains—  
leaves that are many-fingered, like oak.  
They share a sunny table with my geranium  
and the cutting of aloe vera a neighbor brought over  
when I moved into this garden apartment.

In my jewelry box are notes from the only man I loved,  
scribbled to me on the backs of envelopes  
late at night. On my walls are lilies and mermaids  
painted by a sister I had hoped to grow old with.

It is easy to believe, as I climb toward sixty,  
I've accomplished little, but sometimes my wealth  
overflows: Bach's Suites for Lute plucked flawlessly  
from a boom box. The surety a friend will call.  
Leaves like green fire in morning sun.