



**I Wish I Had a
Green Thumb**

By Jenny Dee

See those beautiful, blooming buds of orange lilies on the cover? It's strictly pure luck that they have begun to grow in my meager backyard garden.

The poor things—they won't last for long. If the sun doesn't dry them out, or the rain wash them away, then they'll be obliterated by my son's basketball bouncing where I wish it wouldn't.

I love nature, flowers in particular. You wouldn't know it by the sparsity of my garden. I would love more than anything in this world to sit outside on my cushioned glider and read a romance amongst the rainbow of floral colors and rose and lavender scents that could potentially thrive under my care.

But alas, I have a black thumb.

I have been known to even figure out a subconscious way to kill bamboo plants—twice. A Japanese Maple outside barely survived, and I don't know how one would go about ruining a tree; thankfully, a good landscaper revived it and she is coming back to life somehow. And I know you will tell me this is impossible, but I also had to lay a small little indoor cactus to rest.

I once found these gorgeous Tiger Lilies and planted them in a front yard's lovely landscaping, which was begun and maintained by my then-landlord and his well-paid landscaper, who I would hear talking to the plants on a daily basis.

I was so proud at how they thrived under someone else's care, and admired them every time I passed them. When I moved to California, Mr. Plant Man carefully told me how to care for them, wrapping them up in some special way to make the two-week journey to be re-planted in my new home.

One guess what happened to the floral love of my life. Dead by Mississippi.

I don't try to hurt these beautiful forces of nature. I just don't have a clue as to how to take care of them. It amazes me to this day that I managed to raise two human lives without forgetting to feed, water, shelter and protect them from the elements.

The only things that seem to last in my current backyard are the rose bushes that have been there for years and a lavender bush—and even those I can't seem to maintain without loads of dead branches or overgrowth.

I attempt to prune. I attempt to nurture. I attempt to plant more.

My mother had even come out one year to visit and we went to the Home Depot to buy plants that would come back every year. She is a wonderful gardener. She can bring anything back to life. (Except my dead plants). And so, we bought an array of colorful flowers and potting soil and food and mulch and Lord knows what else she put in my basket to turn my Miss Black Thumb to a green one.

Alas, the only thing that has lasted from her determined attempts are these orange lilies and a wild growing jasmine thing. I don't even have the slightest idea how to manage its unkempt wrapping around the trellis. If it wasn't so pretty and smelled so yummy, I'd be terrified I'd be growing a Little Plant of Horrors.

Speaking of Little Shop...there are these prickly things that DO grow without nurturing every year, a horrible thorny weed-tree-evil-thing that I've nicknamed Audrey 2s. There is not enough weed killer in the world, natural or unnatural, to keep those things away!

My daughter has since taken over the nurturing role of watering them every night, and she does have a special way with flowers that I think they want to grow for her. Of course, she gets aggravated that her slowly successful attempts are thwarted by that dang, wayward basketball, but I do believe she is the reason those orange lilies even showed themselves this year.

I have come to terms with the fact that when someone buys me flowers, they last two days; when I plant something new, it's not coming back; that indoor plants are not my friends any more than outdoor plants are.

My solution? I have a wonderful assortment of store-bought flower and plant arrangements peppered throughout my house, and scented candles for the illusion. And that's about all my little black thumb can handle.