

# Monkey Flower

by Karen Lauritsen

I.

The spring monkey flower is friendly enough,  
with its narrow face and easy bloom.

In the summer, once the land is dry  
and the poppies are scattered seeds,  
the monkey flower browns  
from the ground up,

the sticky leaves shrivel,  
one by one,  
moving up the stem  
leaving a dry, shaggy fringe.

By fall, it may still manage a bloom,  
one that is no less friendly  
yet certainly more wise.

II.

Monkey me  
monkey do  
monkey flower here for you

it smiles dumbly  
the joke too easy  
a white petticoat looks right breezy

I reach towards it  
my blade is ready  
no scent seduces, it is not heady

I stop up short  
and look within  
for there's a bee that works the pin

if it's mine  
it is not yours  
and there's the story of our shores.

III.

In the summer  
if you water it,  
it will stay green and people will admire it.

If you don't, it will brown  
and people will wonder why you planted it.

Either way, it lives.

