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The Jewelweed's Visitor

Mary Graham Bonner

I am the Jewelweed, and I have been expecting someone all morning.

You may know me by another name — Touch-Me-Not, some people call me, because if you touch my seed pods they burst open and the seeds fly out in all directions, which gives people quite a fright. My flowers are orange-yellow with reddish spots, and I've been called the Wild Lady's Slipper and Lady's Eardrops too, for the shape of me.

But this morning I am not thinking about names. I am thinking about my visitor.

They call me Jewelweed because in the early morning, after I've bathed in dew — the Dewdrop Brothers come around every night, very reliable — my leaves sparkle like jewelry in the first light. I always ask Mr. Sun to do something with the sparkle, and he obliges.

I saved my nectar for today. The bee tried to get at it — he has a long tongue, and he was persistent — but I keep the good stuff very deep inside, where only someone with an exceptionally long reach can get to it. I told the bee I was sorry.

Because today, my friend is coming back from the South.

"May I come in?" came a sound, more hum than voice.

"I've been waiting," I said.

Mr. Ruby-Throated Hummingbird hovered in the air before me, bright as a jewel himself, just arrived from his winter in the south.

"You kept it for me," he said, when he'd drunk.

"Our families have done this for a very long time," I said. "It would feel wrong to change."

He couldn't stay — he had other calls to make, other flower friends waiting for word of his return. But he promised to come back.

"You'll always be welcome," I told him, "for as long as there are Jewelweeds and Hummingbirds."



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