

Desert

By Josephine Miles

When with the skin you do acknowledge drought,
The dry in the voice, the lightness of feet, the fine
Flake of the heat at every level line;

When with the hand you learn to touch without
Surprise the spine for the leaf, the prickled petal,
The stone scorched in the shine, and the wood brittle;

Then where the pipe drips and the fronds sprout
And the foot-square forest of clover blooms in sand,
You will lean and watch, but never touch with your hand.

September 1934

Source: *Poetry* (June 2012)