

When at last

When at last I have walked the last mile
And known the bruise of stone and bramble-patch,
And blown sand from my eyes:
When at last my flesh clings to my bending bones
Like rivers on a treacherous land,
And my voice moans its withered song
Lacking any message:
Quickly, quietly lay my mask in an unmasked place
Where time may see its ruin
Sink into the earth.

For when at last this end has come
And roots crawl like snakes
Through the sockets of my eyes
To melt the treasure in my skull:
When they twine around them crushing them to powder,
Shall this substance be willed,
A substance yet to be imprisoned by a potter's vase, glazed?
Heavens no! take it to the field
Where flute lips will take it to their gums!
Pray once again I'll be bathed by the 'tonic sun':
Again comforted by the black-velvet palms of night:
Rustling in the speech of the wind.

/For when

For when at last this end has come
My soul will smile in stars,
Will sparkle the sadness of dewdrops:
My soul will be the dream that conjured
The breath that freedom breathes.

LeRoy Clarke

68-69