"The Explorer" by Chinua Achebe

*Collected Poems*

Like a dawn unheralded at midnight

it opened abruptly before me-a rough

circular clearing, high cliffs of deep

forest guarding it in amber-tinted spell

A long journey's end it was though how

long and from where seemed unclear,

unimportant; one fact alone mattered

now-that body so well preserved

which on seeing I knew had brought me there

The circumstance of death

was vague but a floating hint

pointed to a disaster in the air

elusively

But where, if so, the litter

of violent wreckage? That rough-edged

gypsum trough bearing it like a dead

chrysalis reposing till now in full

encapsulation was broken by a cool

hand for this lying in state. All else

was in order except the leg missing

neatly at knee joint

even the white schoolboy dress

immaculate in the thin yellow

light; the face in particular

was perfect having caught nor fear

nor agony at the fatal moment.

Clear-sighted with a clarity

rarely encountered in dreams

my Explorer-Self stood a little

distant but somewhat fulfilled; behind

him a long misty quest: unanswered

questions put to sleep needing

no longer to be raised. Enough

in that trapped silence of a freak

dawn to come face-to-face suddenly

with a body I didn't even know

I lost.