A Song for My Father

Against the yam-vine quiet of the garden
a nightingale stirred with my father: the lift
and fall of the pickaxe, the heaving throat
of the hidden bird exacting
the subtleties of song.
This would become the memory of high grass
brushing wet against black waterboots.

I didn't realize I was watching him
when, as to an altar
he bent with bare hands to a sudden digging
till the head of yam surfaced
like a flowering from the earth;
the nightingale's song perched
upon the senses, then drifted
from the dewy pimento leaves
and, like a scent, was gone.

by Dolores Gauntlett (Jamaica)

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