

A POEM BY ROBERT ALLEN

ARCHEOLOGIST

We come upon them now and then
Curled up like children in the womb
Of earth where they are bones, put back
For birth again, our faceless
Ancestors, like flowers pressed
In some old book to note a day
Or keep a page. Sometimes
A dog is nestled at their feet,
A bowl of corn put by their head,
A midnight snack in earth's great dark.

Our scientists ask them questions
About their diet and what disease
Or violence left them quiet here;
And then they are once more the dead,
Dead silent for their name or any kin
Or for one line of verse or tell
A tale that might be wise or make
One laugh or sigh. They only throw
A bone to us, who uninvited come
Within their dusty grave, and leave
Us in the dark.