

“Under the Veil” by Ryan Voss is the Winner of the Judd’s Hill 2021 Poetry Contest

Judge Leza Lowitz (visit her at www.lezalowitz.com) commented:

Thank you to everyone who submitted poems for the Judd’s Hill Poetry Contest this year. As always, we received a lively and varied bunch of work, which was a delight to read.

The choice was difficult, but this year’s winner was “Under the Veil” by Ryan Voss. The judges were impressed by the poem’s imagery and depth. The meter and rhyme were also masterful. In the time of Covid, when people of the world had to sequester themselves, re-evaluate their priorities, and re-assess the value of quietude, the act of lifting the veil and listening to the singing underneath feels like a powerful and life-affirming practice. Congratulations to Mr. Voss.

The judges were also impressed by “Unlikely Harvest” by Jeanne Julian and “VINES DON’T KNOW” by Jim McDonald. We wish you all a peaceful fall season.

Under the Veil by Ryan Voss

The night time of vineyards and nectar and lees
A rest from the thrumming as all actions cease

Retired barrels roll down sunseting rows
Of old vines and new vines and all that now grows

They sing stories of ancients in cellars and caves
The history of vintages blessing their staves

While the current cradles of recent yields
Care for these young ones now fresh from the fields

And beneath it all the sweet glory of birth
Comes the bounteous sound of the humming of earth

Unlikely Harvest by Jeanne Julian

Unlikely, a yardful of cultivated vines
in this land of rock and pine. But there
they grow, someone's daring answer
to the cold pounding of Atlantic winters.

Round the bend on Kettle Cove Road,
and you'll see them, neatly trellised,
rows wisely running south to north,
two fruiting wires, H-braces for end-posts.

This September, the grapes ripen well
in succulent clusters, each carefully
wrapped like little gifts for bridesmaids,
translucent cocoons warding off the birds.

Almost time for harvest, I assume.
Perhaps this fruit is destined merely
for a jam-jar, soon to be slathered
on a sandwich for the kids.

But maybe, the modest, hardy crop
will be crushed and pressed and cellared
while several seasons green and whiten
the rugged terroir surrounding

the grower's weathered clapboard homestead,
one better suited to sailors than sommeliers.
Maybe, some frigid evening, a bottle
(unlabeled) will be brought hearthside,

uncorked, set to breathe, then poured.
And tasting, as wind rattles the windows,
someone will melt into a silky summer sea
of black cherries, graphite, violets, and cassis.

VINES DON'T KNOW by Jim Mc Donald

Walk along rural road in spring
consider how vines don't know
about pandemics or politics
each year new growth sprouts.

Vineyards remain secluded places
removed from income inequality
arm's length from urban sprawl
tendrils stretch toward sun's energy.

Grapes pampered until fall harvest
know they won't need healthcare
or suffer from ravages of hunger
ripened fruit crushed into an elixir.

Roots reach deep into valley soil
without worry of gun violence
never victims of domestic abuse
mustard carpets their home in spring.

Sun and moon caress leafy trellises
vines don't consume social media
or binge-watch cable tv dramas
but solely exist for who they are.

ARIA IN VINES by Jim Mc Donald

“Hoy que sientes amor”
vines obscure face of singer
who embraces joyful Tejano tune
tenor aria among lush leaves
hands busy with arduous task
voice flies free in vineyard
mind-dulling repetition his lot
joy he brings into the fields
transports him to another place

Song heartfelt, ode to a lover
home lies a thousand miles away
across deserts wide rivers
blocked by barbed wire, fencing
melody carries over distant hills
jetstreamed to mi novia
loving, tender in absentia
he dutifully sends back paycheck
dreams of their reunion

I cannot see him but image clear
baseball cap blocks sweltering sun
jeans boots weathered face
focuses vine to vine a dance
serenade of life still to come
pure tones hover lift spirits
how can one exude such joy
He merges soil wind this place
essence infuses fruit of these vines.

Goodbye and Keep Chilled by Jeanne Julian

after Robert Frost's "Good-bye and Keep Cold"

This saying goodbye on the tipsy brink
(I'd be over the edge with one more drink)
reminds me of other narrow escapes,
in my passionate youth on those hapless dates
when one more kiss would have sadly led
to a tasteless tangle in a loveless bed.
Leaving this last dram of chardonnay
for next night's glass is the only way
to make sure I'll wake up clear-eyed, steady.
With one last sip, I know I'm ready,
and firmly replacing the cork, I store
my tall green bottle in refrigerator door
with milk and O.J., plugged airtight,
between 45 and 50, Fahrenheit.
(Nothing's worse than a wine gone sour
from improper storage on kitchen counter.)
"How often already you've had to be told,
Keep cold, dear wine, goodbye and keep cold.
Let darkness and cellar temp prevail
'til again it's time for a shared cocktail."
Let me assure you that won't be at breakfast.
I like my wine, but I'm not reckless,
preferring to pair it not with cornflakes
but with salmon or pasta or sautéed crabcakes.
For now I'll sleep, by day I'll work.
I won't dream of it dreaming there in the dark,
waiting for someone to pop its cork....
Yes, this parting is such sweet sorrow,
But something has to be left for tomorrow.

*"Wine is the music that fills the cup of silence."
—Robert Fripp of King Crimson*

In Napa Valley's Golden Light by Katharyn Howd Machan

Fox listens, widening her dimensions.
Up till now, grapes have been task enough,
sweet's sour and sour's sweet
all the purple her tongue's needed.
But she's known silence, too much silence
in the long depth of her days.
Dare she seek companionship?
Might she venture past curled vines?
Crow looks down and laughs black wings
at how she hesitates, hope clear.
Could they together reach to find
the song of barrels' joy?
One paw, two paws, three paws, four
she makes her way toward red and white
poured into goblets waiting. Bold:
she licks the liquid once, twice,
looks up at Crow where his caw hovers,
invites him down to share with her
what harvest turns to tuneful love.

Dom Pérignon in my Youth by Ryan Lindblom

Unlike Leisl, I was young
When I had my first Champagne
Onto the delicate flute I clung
As to not show my disdain
Dom Pérignon at only 10
What an unspeakable waste
I wouldn't get to try it again
Until later when my palate was graced
With tiny bubbles, bread and yeast
Apple, nuts and pear
My former repugnance was released
A truly fine affair
As bubbles delicately rise in the glass
I feel luxurious, brimming with class

Controlled Decomposition by Ryan Lindblom

Without human intervention,
Wine, as we know it,
Could not come to fruition.
Yes, the grapes would rot, decay,
Spoil, wither and decompose,
But never into such beauty.
It takes a knowing yet reserved hand
To create and control an environment
Where the unseen forces
Can make the ultimate conversion
Of the season's bounty into
An inebriant indulgence for all seasons.
Imagine the first rudimentary human
To discover, then bravely taste,
This unfamiliar brew,
Then imagine their elation
When it opened their mind.

Aged by Ryan Lindblom

A vintage is a year in the making,
but you'll have to wait longer still.
Like humanity, wine takes time to
mature, evolve, settle, change.

To come into its own.

This is the circle

Of life

All

We

Have

Is

Time.

Your patience will be rewarded.

Grandpa in the Woods by Gabby Gilliam

You stumble through the woods crimson-fingered
clothes stained. Dark juice covers you entirely.

Your hands are scratched. In places they are bleeding.
Rivulets of blood and juice run toward your elbows.

You tenderly pick one more plump, ripe blackberry
place it in the bowl pinned between your hip and elbow.

When you get home, you pour the berries into the tub
brutally mash them into little bits—take all the juice from them you can.

I've seen a wine-making gone bad all over the walls and floor
of your small bathroom; the bathtub littered with particles of stem and berries.

I've tasted the results of a wine-making
that hasn't gone bad—felt it burn all the way down.

The glass jug was heavy and smelled
nothing like berries, tasted nothing like berries.

My throat burned for hours.

Young Wine by Cathy Hollister

Hints of unripe cherries with a
promise of peppercorns
displays a sassy arrogance
seldom seen in more mature varietals
freshly bottled, eager to surprise and amaze
pours forth to a wiser village
sophisticated enough to know and appreciate
experience over expediency
aged over green

Intoxicated by its own intoxicating power
proud of its transformation
from childish grape to teen splendor
oblivious to the potential complexities of de vine
the chrysalis newly opened
blinded by the riot of the sun, naively
spills out on an unsuspecting landscape
tipsy

Wine Memories by Marianne Lyon

A graceful swirl
of Cabernet
dervishes me down
to Grandpas' cellar
dark shrouded
pungent
sweaty barrels
stained red

A coquettish
swirl
of Chardonnay
and
I feel his
velvet eyes smile
through legs
transparent
dancing around
the glass

I sip
Pinot Noir
recline
impromptu
in Provence vineyard
Taste lacy flowers
waltzing
with wild fruit

disco swirl
whiff
aeriated memories
Another sip

buttery memories
still to be fermented

His Cellar by Marianne Lyon

I walk at dusk
grapevines heavy
light plays like a stream
of shimmering ripples
a graceful scent
of ripe fruit whispers me
down to Grandpa's cellar
whimsical place
tenderly he tends
barrels damp with juice
cauldrons of nectar immortal

I see his swagger to spigot
am drawn too
like a moth to ardent flame
wine trickles into glass jug
a gritty smell wafts out
inhales me into childhood familiar—
grandma's stewed prunes
earth puddled with evening rain
mom's blackberry cobbler
burnt sugar sweet

I walk at dusk
grapevines wait for the knife
the stomp, the ferment
what I would give for a moment
down in his sanctuary
friends and family
giggling jokes
my innocent heart knowing
sure meaning of ruckus din—
a fugue of sips
laughter, gossip
to scramble down
rickety steps
leap deep
into that pungent memory
intoxicated

Sacrament of Life by Marianne Lyon

Luscious ripened grapes
Pressed
Velvet lush liquid
Sips smoothly
Brings blush to cheek
Calms nerves
Warms soul
Brings people together
Share laughs
Hopes truths dreams
Savor crisp tart berries
Fragrant communion

Kiss Noir by Denise Utt

Your tie, a loose tongue selling insurance.
Fire, theft and flood -- it wouldn't take much

and I could be naked. Hard pressed. I color
my lips Fire-Engine Red, roll my tongue

over my lips, then open. My fickle
job dropped me for the first soldier returning

from war. I'm hungry like you, and if the moon
rolls the stars right, we'll strike lightning.

I lift your ring finger and declare, a bad claim.
You pull it back. I say, Negative's

a lonely place, you need a liquid provision.
I tap a bottle of Pinot Noir.

I kiss it, then place it in your hands.
You splash the wine into glasses. It breathes,

full-bodied! Your boilerplate. You'll flood me
with words you've used before. I'll scrawl

my signature over the sheet and if a fire storm
blackens my house, my value: used goods.

A woman's worth, still not much without a man.
Your lips quiver, then deliver mine.

We clear tinder, tender down.
Endurance, no insurance.

Praxilla on the Creeping Cucumber, Flower, and Vine by Deborah H. Doolittle

Almost sunlight, whose radiance
I miss each night; splintered like stars
that fill the heavens, and soft as the look
the moon sheds my way; not quite pretty
is the fruit, not like those apples and pears
which I pluck ripe from the trees and
bear home staggering; but just as pleasing
to my eyes is the cucumber, its flowers,
which I've gazed upon this long hour,
its tremulous vine tumbling through
my thoughts like fine wine.

Hope Changes Places with Fate by Deborah H. Doolittle

At the dinner table, they keep switching wine
glasses, trading the cup that runneth over
with the goblet containing the poisoned pearl.

Each time, they clink said drinks as if in good cheer,
as if ringing in the new year, as if *auld*
lang syne meant something more than mere jibberish.

And just before they bring the rims to their lips,
one or the other of them offers a toast,
part boast, roast, and wish dished out in triplicate.

When the music stops, they jump up and take new
seats, dizzy, almost giddy, seizing that tall
glass of ice water before they start over.

Red, Red Wine by Deborah H. Doolittle

Oh, my love's a glass of red, red wine
that's newly poured from this
here bottle. Oh, it tastes as divine
as the lips I like to kiss

and kind of know that I should not have.
How luscious are its legs
and dark its tannins. Darker by half
again as tea. Which begs

the eternal question: to drink or
not to drink just one glass?
sits heavily with me. Let me pour.
A vintage like this won't last.

Dance by Gregory Furco

Warm was the summer night
She tuned the radio so
The music played
Poured herself a
Glass of Chardonnay
And danced beneath
The full moon's gaze.

Uncorked by Lucia Haase

Uncorked,
I let it breathe
and I begin to p o u r
it out,
what has been fermented.

It's a glass
of FULL body wine
today
with a certain
balance and blend.

There seethes an aroma
of happiness-
a bouquet
of color and fragrance
VIBRANT

from the very heart,
to be able
to share it...
this poem-
uncorked.

Vineyard Serenade by Sharon Owen

Carlo, the vintner, plays Mozart
to acres of his growing vines.
Indeed the purple and maroon clusters thrive
unharmd by pests, worm, or mold.
They are "robusto,"
larger than those in the
silent rows left behind.

These notes sing a mystery
of more than meets the eye,
gracing more than root, stem, leaf, and fruit--
the soil of soul, mind, heart,
deeper than brain or bone.

Wine is music in the glass,
melody sipping its way to
tongue and throat, lingering its
nuanced harmonies with
recollections of sun warm on skin
and skins of grapes, glowing.

Vine by Sheldon Craven

Coming up from the earth

I climb

Looking for a place

To expand and grow

I supply beautiful fruit

For your delicious delight

Liberty by Sheldon Craven

I see it

In my thoughts

Spongy, slim, and attractive

Brewing red

A passion overcomes me

Criminal even

I slide my hand over the glass bottle

Slide knife under the wrapper

I extract tool that releases you

Pop the cork

Inhale for a moment

Passion invades

A glass appears

Pouring begins

Palate of Judges by Sheldon Craven

Swishing

Spitting

Smacking

Figuring out the flavors of the wine

Selecting some

And rejecting others

The cycle begins again

Until a winner is selected

Wine as Art by Larry Godwin

The conscious use of skill, taste, and creative imagination
to produce sounds, colors, forms, or other elements
so they become aesthetic objects.

This definition characterizes Napa Valley wines.

Drinking wine, like reading a poignant poem
or listening to a melodic piano sonata
arouses and stimulates the emotions
for the artist conceives each to grant pleasure.
Full appreciation requires a sharp mental focus
and proper veneration demands
awareness, discrimination, and judgment.

No rules govern the creation of a sculpture or tapestry.
Likewise the selection, irrigation, and tending of grapes
the point at which they are picked and how they are crushed
the fermentation, blending, and aging of each wine
and the release date after bottling
constitute personal, artistic decisions.

The singular elegance and harmony
I encounter sipping a Judd's Hill Cabernet
engender the same spiritual uplift I feel
listening to Beethoven's Seventh Symphony.
The two together in gracious company
ensure a memorable experience.