

Ode to Wine

from *Elemental Odes*
by Pablo Neruda

Wine the color of day,
wine the color of night,
wine with purple feet
or topaz blood,
wine,
starry son
of the earth,
wine, smooth
like a saber of gold,
suave
like a decadent velvet feel,
wine decanted in a spiral seashell
and suspended,
amorous,
marine,
you've never belonged in one cup,
in one song, in one man,
chorus-like, gregarious are you,
and at least, feeling's mutual.
Sometimes
you feed on our memories
of fatalistic melancholy,
sloshed in your wave
tumbling in tomb dead drunk we go,
you mason of this stone-cold sepulcher,
and we cry
passing tears,
but
to be in your handsome
picnic suit
is a different scene,
the heart rises to the treetops,
the rustling breeze keeps the day going,
nothing is left unmoved
within your immovable soul.
The vintage
puts in motion the springtime bustle,
the joy of winemaking grows like a plant,
derelict walls are felled,
vineyard-laden cliffs are beheld,
the steep drops are closed,
the song is born.
Oh thou, jug of wine, in the desert
with the tasty woman whom I adore,
songfully recited the old bard.

Now that be the pitcher of wine
whose kiss complements the kiss of love.

My love, instantly
your hip
is the full curve
of the wine cup,
your bosom is the bunched fruit of the vine,
the bright teardrop lines of the alcohol your hair,
the grapes your nipples,
your navel the vintner's genuine seal
stamped on your wine vessel womb,
and your love the cascade
of wine inextinguishable,
the clarity that illuminates my senses,
the earthly splendor of life.

Yet no true love,
burning kiss
or heart consumed with fire
are you, wine of life,
but for
the friendship of others, in the open,
in the conducted chorus of song,
in the abundant flowering of conviviality.
I love having on a table,
when engaged in conversation,
the light of a bottle
of intelligent wine.
That in drinking it,
I remember in every
drop of gold
or cup of topaz
or spoon of purple
that job that is the autumn harvest
all the way to the filling of wine in the vessels
and the man who seeks illumination learns,
in the ritual celebration of his business,
to remember the land and his duties,
to propagate the sacred song of the fruit.

Translated by Alex Sawit
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