

To Jourdan

By Lauren Gustafson

The first was a new blend,
A Syrah, ruby wine.

It did not sit on my tongue
But lifted instead, into my veins.
When we bought the bottle,
I told you to follow me.
We ran through the vines
Up a yellow hill
To the old California oak,
Backs to the lowest branches,

Where I caught my breath.
Heavy air, and you,
Like Syrah,
Syrah, Syrah,
Spilling down my arms,
Into my hands, onto my chest,
Up to my lips,
For a while,

And oak shadows moved
on your face.
In Europe, you said,
They leave the vine alone.
It's God's choice, you said.
Live or die.
With lucky grapes
The French mix juices.
Add water, sweeten, and blend.
"And here?" I said.

They irrigate them,
Irritate them.
But then,
Pure wine,

From the first press.

“Cheers,” you said.
To the oil of the grape,
The life of the vine,
Its blood on my tongue.