

A LITTLE WINE WITH DINNER  
First Place Poetry 2009

A little wine with dinner.  
I'm not sure if he is avoiding my eyes,  
But I avoid his.  
Preferring to stare instead at the young doctor taking notes.  
It's his visit I reason,  
In the split second it takes for his doctor to accept this and move on.

I want to define a little wine.  
Measured in Trader Joe cases,  
Beer that starts with lunch,  
Dry Martinis before dinner.  
But I stay quiet,  
It's his visit.

I speak up about the emphysema,  
When he says he doesn't smoke,  
But neglects the years of a two pack a day habit.  
I explain his list of medicines,  
When he says he is healthy.  
But on the alcohol, I am silent  
Caught off guard by this sudden opportunity,  
In a bright sterile room  
To speak the truth.

It is long past the time for interventions,  
Confrontations, accusations.  
And the anger long ago stuck in my throat  
Replaced by an understanding that we all have our demons  
And they live with us in a glass house.

As the doctor gets up to leave  
I try to think of a final, offhand way to describe years of drinking  
And am caught off guard by a look at my father  
Staggering under the weight of the piper  
Here to collect his dues.

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