Bourne toWrite... creative writing workshops

Malbec

by Mikey Young

The bad blood rose in me, just like wine. Not rosé wine, not that filth. Not the stuff that looks like weak squash and tastes like sad summers and burnt barbecues. Not the five percent wine either—what's the point? It isn't fizzy. It's not a celebration. It's not all those bubbles going to my head and burning the back of my throat. It's not a party hat or a squeaky balloon or a Colin the Caterpillar cake.

It's not boxed wine that cannot breathe, that comes with a plastic tap and an open apology. Once the box is finished, I'm left with what looks like a used blood transfusion bag: an adult Capri-Sun, a DIY colostomy bag for the vampire within.

It's not train wine in one of those tiny bottles that makes your hand look like a giant's. Or, worse still, a can. As if grape and tin can be such a thing.

It's not orange wine; the colour is all off, for starters. It could be sangria. But who has time to steep the fruit, add the juice and swirl the ice? I do not.

It isn't dessert wine, the kind that makes your trifles sing—and your grandmothers too. It certainly isn't cheap wine. What can you do with that apart from unblock toilets? I would love an expensive wine. But why must the finest things be so costly?

That said, I once had a vintage Pinot Noir, rich in colour and bursting with life. After a quick swill—bin it. Tasted like muddy puddles, old coins and shame.

No, this wine is dark and full-bodied. A Merlot or a Malbec, perhaps. It has character. It has a heartbeat. It has an iron taste. It knows your darkest secrets, your weakest links. It knows the days you've missed. The tears you've shed. The heart that aches. It feels like thunder and sparks like lightning, and all the while, it keeps you numb.

I stare at the broken bottle.

The wine flows from my wrist and into the bath. My full-bodied body is no more. Yes, Malbec. That is the wine I have decided my blood most resembles.

Malbec.