



THE HAWKES WINE CLUB

May 15, 2020

A LETTER TO THE SHAREHOLDERS

“Why doesn’t anyone live on the Moon?” my daughter, Beatrice asked me.

“Well,” I said, “it’s pretty far away, for one.”

“How far?” she said.

“About two hundred and thirty-nine thousand miles,” I said.

“That is a ways,” she said.

“Indeed,” I said.

We were sitting in the garden. I don’t know what time it was. Dark. Time is not what it used to be. There the Moon was, big and clean and yellow. It looked like a perfectly good place to live.

“Also,” I said, “there’s no oxygen up there. Or very little, anyway.”

“That’s not strictly true,” she said. “The Moon’s crust is actually full of oxygen. About forty percent.”

“I didn’t know that,” I said. “How is it you know about the Moon’s crust being full of oxygen, but you don’t even know how far away it is?”

“Its distance never seemed critical to me. I admit, it’s farther away than I thought, but it doesn’t seem prohibitive.”

I looked over at her. She was looking up at the Moon. A year ago, she was cute, now she was beautiful. In truth, nothing can be depended upon to stay the same: not the air, not the water, certainly not your children. There is no God, but if there were, he’d be sitting in a Barca lounge somewhere, looking at pictures of the universe when it was young, marveling at how far it’s come. After all, they say it’s ever-expanding – the universe, I mean. They say the pieces of it are getting farther apart from each other all the time.

“Let’s go to bed,” I said.

“Alright,” she said.

We walked back toward the house across the dark ground, keeping our eyes on the yellow light of the window in the back bedroom. I caught Beatrice’s hand, and she let me keep it. The metaphor of the light in the window as the Moon and us traveling across the darkened ground of the garden toward it the way a rocket might travel across the distance between the Earth and the Moon – this metaphor was not lost on me. That was my theory of life: a collection of metaphors, a single story playing itself out in an endless variety of shapes and sizes. The players may change, but the narrative remains the same.

When I woke up the next morning, Beatrice was sitting at the kitchen table. She had opened up a bunch of grocery bags and spread them across the table and was making marks on them with a pencil and various measuring devices.

“What’s that?” I said.

“A schematic,” she said.

“A schematic of what?” I said.

“A rocket ship,” she said. “You know, to get to the Moon.”

“Of course,” I said and smiled patronizingly.



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She took a long time on the schematic, which is not the way I do things. I prefer to act without planning—that way, I can be surrounded by my own mistakes and miscalculations for the rest of my life. If I were writing an autobiography, its title would be *Oops*. I don't know how people maintain any sort of momentum with all that planning. Whenever I try to hold still, I end up drinking beer. But, there the schematic was every morning, and there Beatrice was, making marks on it. Eventually, there were scale models made of gum wrappers and toothpicks.

One morning, I woke up to the sound of power tools in the garden. I put on my old polyester boxing robe with the tiger across the back, grabbed a cup of Joe and wandered out there. Beatrice was in her mid-teens by now. No, wait, she was seventeen, turning eighteen in a few weeks. Geez. I scratched my stomach.

“What you working on there?” I said.

“My Moon rocket,” she said.

“Cool,” I said.

I said it the way you say “Cool,” when your kid shows you a drawing of a cat with three legs and the head of Abraham Lincoln. I didn't think the rocket was cool. I thought it was a misguided piece of crap. You can't build a rocket out of two-by-fours. Maybe back in the day you could have, when framing lumber was still worth a crap, when craftsmanship still meant something in this country. But not these days, not with those rasty little seedlings that pass for trees now. No sir.

“You sure you wanna make it out of wood, huh?” I said.

“That's just the scaffold,” Beatrice said. “The rocket itself will be primarily comprised of ovular titanium struts wrapped in 22 gauge polonium sheeting, with a lead-free crystal windshield and onboard oxygen generator. It'll have solid state electronics throughout, except for the stereo. That'll be a pair of Klipsch Heresys powered by a McIntosh MC2105.”

“Well, pardon me,” I said, all huffy. I went back in the house to sit around and look at my phone. Clearly, my expertise was no longer respected, out there in the garden.

The whole family gathered for the launch. It was early April. Beatrice had turned eighteen a few weeks before. I wanted to have a party for her, but she was busy working on her stupid rocket. She had sewn herself a suit. It had darts in the jacket and said “B ♥ Moon” in golden letters on the chest. She walked around, holding her helmet against her hip, telling us goodbye. When it was my turn, she said:

“I love you, Dad.”

“Yeah, whatever,” I said.

“I'll call you as soon as I get to the Moon,” she said.

“Yeah,” I said, “I'll be waiting by the phone.”

A few of the neighbors came out of their houses when the second tier of the boosters kicked on. We ran back to the driveway to avoid getting torched. So much for my zucchini plants. Typical.

The flight took less than a day, but I didn't hear from Bea for fifty-four hours. I happened to be sitting there, staring at my phone, when it started buzzing. The screen read “unidentified number: Moon.” I let it buzz for a while,



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then answered it and said, “Yeah, who is this?”

“Dad,” Beatrice said, “it’s me.”

“Oh,” I said. “Hey.”

It turns out the reason Bea hadn’t called earlier was that there were a bunch of other girls, I mean young women, up there on the Moon. There were even some young men there, apparently. Apparently they were establishing a colony, mining for oxygen, building a gravity dome, etc. Apparently there were no plans for a prompt return.

“I feel like you’re going to look down on me for the rest of your life,” I said.

“Well,” Beatrice said. “The Moon orbits around the Earth, so sometimes I’ll be looking down on you, and sometimes I’ll be looking up to you.”

“Hmm,” I said. “How do we – you know, the Earth – look from up there?”

“Lovely,” she said. “But small.”

Beatrice and I talk pretty regularly these days. I guess she’s a mechanical engineer, now. I guess there’s a lot of demand for her expertise, where she lives. That said, I don’t know what the certification process is on the Moon. I don’t know that engineering is the same, highly competitive field that it is here, on Earth. After all, there’s hardly any gravity there. Oh: she met a guy from Cleveland named Todd. Personally, I’ve never met a Todd who impressed me. But who am I to judge? Again, we’re talking about the Moon, here. I suppose it’s inevitable that they’ll have kids, up there. I’ve tried to convince Bea that the Moon is no place to raise children, but my arguments, as usual, fall on deaf ears. Moonlings for grandchildren. Who’d have thunk.

Before signing off, let me mention that I’ve revised my theory of life: it isn’t a series of metaphors. It isn’t a bunch of interchangeable parts. There may be eight billion people on the Earth, but none of them are my daughter, Bea. And, when this strange period of separation comes to an end - whether I have to fly to the Moon or drag it down, into the backyard - that will be like nothing else. To be with the people you love, that is a joy like nothing else.

This is the maiden voyage of our **2016 Alexander Valley Cabernet**. It’s a 100% Cabernet Sauvignon, a blend of fruit from all three of our estate vineyards: Red Winery, Stone, and Pyramid. 2016 is a dark, luscious vintage in Cabernet and this wine shows that – purple-hued and laced with black fruit on the nose and palate, most notably blackberry and plum. It has a brambly, herbaceous character, too – a touch of thyme and sage and violet to balance the dark fruit. Today, this is an exciting tumultuous wine that demands food. Give it a year or two and watch it get broader in every direction. Drink now through 2035.

This is also the one and only shipment of our **2016 Stone Vineyard Cabernet**. My parents bought this ranch in 1971 and, a year later, planted one of Alexander Valley’s first Cabernet vineyards here. The subsoil at the Stone Vineyard is a crumbling yellow rock made of compressed volcanic ash and the grapes that grow there reflect



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that fact: the tannins are always firm and, when young, the wines have a brooding and withdrawn character. In the right year and with the right amount of time, they evolve into wines with the sort of tannic structure and complexity of flavor that only great Cabernet can achieve.

Tasting the 2016 now, I find it opens remarkably in the glass: currants, cloves, blackberry, black cherry, a touch of sage and bay laurel. The finish is still fairly tight, but with a little time it's already showing some generous, ripe fruit. Drink 2021 to 2035.

Depending on what the summer holds, this may be our last shipment of our **2017 Alexander Valley Merlot**. We farm about eighty acres of grapes, and only about three acres of Merlot, in one block, on our Red Winery Vineyard. It wasn't always this way. When we started making wine, back in 2002, we had three blocks of Merlot on two different vineyards. Every year, we crushed, fermented, and barreled wine from each of them, then tasted them side-by-side. And, every year, we liked the wine from those same three acres on Red Winery Road.

Why? Because this vineyard produces Merlot with great varietal character: delicate, aromatic, spicy. The 2017 is a great example of that. It doesn't have the heavy fruit or tannic intensity of Cabernet, and that's the way I like it. It smells like violets and cassis and blueberries. There's a touch of allspice in there, too. Yum. Drink now to 2030.

About two months ago, right after our Chardonnay had broken dormancy on our Stone Vineyard and begun to grow tender green shoots, it was hit by a hard frost and burned significantly. Surveying the damage, a guy who works for me asked: why don't we just grow Chardonnay somewhere warmer?

If you've ever tasted our Chardonnay, you may already know the answer: no other vineyard can do what this vineyard does. It's planted in a mixture of volcanic ash and ancient riverbed in a fold of hills that separates the Alexander and Russian River Valleys. It's one of the coldest vineyard sites in Sonoma County and the character of the wine reflects that fact. The **2018 Home Chardonnay** is bracing and lively, full of citrus and green apple and honeydew. It was aged on the lees, in neutral barrels, for about six months, then bottled, without allowing the wine to go through secondary fermentation.

Incidentally, the vineyard has recovered nicely since being hit by that frost. Today is May 3rd. Keep your fingers crossed.

Stay healthy. Thank you for your support.

– Jake