



THE HAWKES WINE CLUB

September 21, 2022

A LETTER TO THE SHAREHOLDERS

"You think there are mice on the moon?" asked Jeremy.

"Mice?" I said.

"Or, you know, rodents of any sort. Ground squirrels, maybe. Do ground squirrels eat cheese?"

"I imagine they would," I said, "given the chance."

We were sitting out in the yard, drinking Cab and Coke, looking up at the dark sky.

"I guess that's the existential threat to the moon, then," Jeremy said. "Hashtag the many faces of climate change."

"What's the existential threat to the moon?" I said.

"Being consumed by rodents," Jeremy said. "Presumably from within."

"OK," I said.

"My ex loved cheese," Jeremy said. "That was one of her good qualities. She ran off with an astronaut. Or a pilot. Or a trapeze artist. Somebody who traveled by air."

"It's the wave of the future," I said.

"She passed away recently," Jeremy said. "Something vehicular."

"I'm sorry," I said.

We sat in silence, looking up at the sky.

"If you had to pick something," Jeremy said. "What would you say poses the greatest existential threat to earth?"

"What's the difference between an existential threat and a regular threat?" I said.

"Existential is worse. It's like a mortal threat."

"I thought it was a mortal wound," I said.

"Not before it's a threat," Jeremy said.

"Pass me that Cabernet," I said.

He handed me the bottle and I poured a good slug of it into my glass. Wine is delicious, but it's such a small thing. It's not penicillin. It's not hydrogen fusion. It's not even a river full of clear, blue water. It's a small thing.

"What do you think happens to thoughts?" Jeremy said.

"Happens how?" I said.

"Or emotions," Jeremy said. "Where would you say they go?"

"I don't assign a physical existence to thoughts and emotions," I said. "So, nowhere, I guess."

"Love, for example," Jeremy said. "It's your belief that when it ends, it's as if it never occurred at all."

"I'm not saying it never occurred," I said. "I'm just saying it's gone."

"What about sound waves?" Jeremy said.

"What about them?" I said.

"You think they simply disappear?"

"I don't know how that actually works," I said. "I imagine them getting farther and farther apart. A sort of diffusion that causes them to become inaudible."

"But they still exist," Jeremy said. "Somewhere. Even if they'll never be heard again."

"I think so," I said. "I'd have to read up on it."

"If you had to choose a metaphor for human existence, what would you go with?"

"Maybe a county fair," I said. "Or a washing machine."

"I was thinking of a photocopier. I read somewhere that there is less variation between the people of the earth than there would be between 8 billion copies of the same document made by the same copier."

"That's a lot of work for one copier," I said.

"Toner and such," Jeremy said. "Inconsistencies in the paper, I suppose."

"Genetic or visual variation?" I said.



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“The point is, humanity exists according to a pattern. Better said: human life is a pattern. Individual life is redundant.”

“Isn’t that like saying each thread in a rug is redundant?” I said. “That doesn’t make sense. No threads, no rug.” I listened to the sound of Jeremy opening another bottle, listened to it being poured into a glass.

“What about the stars?” I said. “Are they redundant?”

“Individually, yes,” Jeremy said. “But not as a phenomenon.”

“It would suck if they took away the ones we can see,” I said. “I mean if like an independent auditor was hired to review of the universe and determined that the Bigger Dipper should be eliminated in order to improve efficiency. That would be a bummer.”

“What I said earlier about Batty?” Jeremy said. “That wasn’t true.”

“Wait,” I said. “Who’s Batty?”

“My ex,” Jeremy said. “Her name was Jessica but we called her Batty because she was frickin nuts. I know it sounds mean, but it was her idea.”

“That is nuts,” I said.

“She’s not actually dead. She’s just in Inglewood.”

“That’s great,” I said. “Are you going to go see her?”

“Nah,” Jeremy said. “I think it’s like those sound waves you were talking about – never to be heard from again. Just out there somewhere, looking for something to bounce off.”

We sat there for a while.

“You promise not to think less of me if I admit something to you?” Jeremy said.

“Does it involve children?” I said.

“Not directly,” Jeremy said.

“Fire away,” I said.

“I think you’re right about the rug.”

“What about it?” I said.

“No threads, no rug.”

“Yeah,” I said.

“Sometimes I wish our lives didn’t matter,” Jeremy said. “Especially when I’m in pain.”

“I know what you mean,” I said.

“It’s nice sometimes to think that we don’t exist. Not in a way that matters, anyway.”

“But we do,” I said.

“Yeah,” Jeremy said.

We looked up at the stars. Time went by.

“I’d say Steely Dan,” I said.

“What about them?” Jeremy said.

“I’d say they pose the greatest existential threat to humanity.”

“That’s hard to argue,” Jeremy said.

Most people reading this have just received a bottle or three of our 2018 Alexander Valley Estate Cabernet Sauvignon. Until recently, 2018 was not a standout vintage in my mind. But, tasting these wines today has me wondering how I missed the early promise of what must now be recognized as one of our most successful vintages. Both the 2018 Alexander Valley Estate and the 2018 Stone Vineyard Cabernet exhibit a balance of fruity, readily pleasing characteristics and savory, flinty structure that I think we usually miss. This is, after all, California, where ripe grapes and hubris wait



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around every corner in the winemaking process; I often find restraint more difficult to achieve than power.

So, about the 2018 Alexander Valley Estate:

Fruit from our Pyramid Vineyard makes up more than half the blend this year; thus, even though the 2018 is remarkably lean and balanced, it is also darker than usual. The nose shows black cherry and cassis with just a hint of wet earth peaking through. The finish is still tannic and grippy, but this wine is more open than it was just a few months ago. Drink this fall through 2040.

It's rare that I taste one of my own wines and fail to find it lacking but that's what happened when I tasted the 2018 Stone a few weeks ago. This single vineyard Cabernet comes from the ranch I grew up on down at the southern edge of Alexander Valley. It's warmer there than it used to be and the wines we've made in recent vintages generally reflect that: they're soft and riper and more plush than they used to be. But the 2018 doesn't exactly fit that trend. Yes, there's plenty of dark fruit here, most notably blackberry. But there are a lot of savory, herbaceous notes, too. Brambles and thyme and dried sage. A little miso. It's dry but it's not puckery. Very, very balanced. Drink now through 2040.

Our Merlot is always sourced from the same small block on our Red Winery Vineyard in the foothills of the Mayacamas Mountains, planted by my dad in 1973. It's a vineyard that typically makes a bright, floral style of Merlot, but the 2019 is dark all the way through - black cherry, plum and bittersweet chocolate. Use of new barrels was, as usual, minimal, and that helps the fruit shine through, all the way from the aroma to the flavor to the finish. Drink now through 2030.

Hawkes Chardonnay comes from the vineyard my parents first planted on Chalk Hill Road in 1972. I believe there is more magic in this site than any other I have come across in my life of growing grapes and making wine. A lot of it is in the soil - an ancient creek bed in a basin of compressed volcanic ash. The 2021 is an especially rich expression of this typically lean Chardonnay. Citrus galore: grapefruit, Meyer lemon, mandarin. There's a tropical component here, too. Is that guava or passionfruit? Wowzers.

Well, ladies and gentlemen, that's all I've got for today. It's off to harvest.

Thank you for your support. – Jake