



THE HAWKES WINE CLUB

November 13, 2023

A LETTER TO THE SHAREHOLDERS

"You think caveman engaged in marriage?" Jeremy said.

We were barbecuing in his backyard in Los Angeles. The lights of the hills rose around us like a forest of insecure Christmas trees begging for attention.

"I'm not sure you say caveman anymore," I said. "Isn't it like caveperson or something? Cave dweller, maybe?"

"Cave dwellers are Italian," Jeremy said, "I'm speaking more generally."

"I don't think we know," I said. "I don't think there's a lot of available data on cave people."

"There's data on everything," Jeremy said. "You just have to know where to look."

"Where?" I said.

"Do I look like Robinson Crusoe to you?" Jeremy said.

"You look like a moron with a spatula," I said.

"Your mom's a moron with a spatula," Jeremy said.

"What did you say?" I said.

I put my hands at my sides the way I used to in junior high and went over and pushed my chest into his. I pushed my belly into his, actually, because that's the part of my body I lead with, these days.

"Go ahead," I said. "Say it again. I dare you. Say it."

"What?" Jeremy said, "you think I won't say it. You think –"

The sliding door opened onto the patio and Jeremy's wife, Alexandra, stepped out. We moved away from each other and tried to look bored.

"Two things," Jeremy's wife said. "Your son is going to go into diabetic shock if he doesn't eat soon."

"Right," Jeremy said. "The burgers are literally going on as we speak."

"They are literally not," Alexandra said.

"Right again," Jeremy said. "Not literally, no."

"Second: I need you to keep it under thirty decibels out here. Laura and I are watching Magic Mike XXL. Say it with me: voice modulation."

"Of course," Jeremy said. "We'll keep it under thirty."

"How loud is thirty decibels?" I whispered after Alexandra went inside.

"It's like the sound of a not very loud bird," Jeremy whispered.

"What," I said. "Like a mockingbird?"

"Mockingbirds are yellers," Jeremy whispered. "More like a sparrow."

"I've never heard a sparrow," I said.

"Exactly," Jeremy said.

He put the burgers on and flipped them and then we made them the way our wives and children like and served them where they sat on the couch watching Magic Mike XXL.

"Um, honey," I said, "are you, um, totally sure it's ok for the girls to be watching this?"



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“What is this?” she said, looking at her burger. “You know I like a lot of lettuce on my burger.”

I went in the kitchen and got some more lettuce and then Jeremy and I went back out to stand around the barbecue and drink ourselves senseless on cheap beer.

“We aren’t as loveable as we used to be,” I said. “It’s as simple as that.”

“You’re not,” Jeremy said. “But I am. Lovable as ever.”

“You’re stale bread,” I said.

The sky was suddenly lit by something like a shooting star, only brighter. It hurt to look at. We watched it, whatever it was, crash into the western hills, perhaps two miles from where we stood. The ground shook. We didn’t speak for a few seconds.

“Nice night,” Jeremy said.

“Was that real?” I said.

“Was what real?” Jeremy said.

“That meteor or whatever,” I said. “That thing that just smashed into the hills over there.”

“Oh, that,” Jeremy said. “Yeah, that was real.”

He took a drink of his beer.

“Shouldn’t we like, do something?” I said.

“I prefer not doing things,” Jeremy said.

“I think we should do something,” I said.

“Go ahead,” Jeremy said. “Do something.”

“I will, I said. “I’ll do something. Here I go.”

I set down my beer and walked toward the gate out to the street.

“Wait up,” Jeremy said.

When the earth is, say, struck by an even larger meteor and all life more complicated than bacteria is erased and then left to its own devices, will evolution still exist? To quote my father, when I asked him this question at the age of eight: “Of course.” So, then, will life go about complicating itself all over again? Will fish develop legs and then mustaches and then self-loathing and so on until eventually some new life form will walk this path through the desert of Southern California, just as I was walking now, and look through the windows of thousands of stucco boxes set out in a row with animals inside – animals as grand and great as any dog or tiger, any bluefin tuna or albatross – sitting in those boxes, staring at glowing blue rectangles?

You could smell the impact of the meteor as we walked up the hill. It was a fancy neighborhood, Morningwood or Santa Erica or something – a place where the houses were separated by idealized versions of nature from all over the world – here a forest of saguaros, there a tropical oasis. I expected to see a great perimeter of wreckage, but there was none. No thought passes through my head more often than the thought that I am crazy – it is like the murmur of surf in the dark one moment, the next a crashing wave that drowns everything beneath it. But then, there was the meteor crater. It was still smoking a little and we could feel its warmth. We stood looking down



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into it.

“Wait,” Jeremy said. “Is that a guy down there?”

He took out his phone and showed it into the smoke and dark.

“That’s not doing crap,” I said. “You’re going to have to go down in there.”

“I’m not going down there,” Jeremy said.

“You have to,” I said.

“You go down there,” Jeremy said. “If you’re so big on the idea, do it yourself.”

“I will,” I said.

“Go ahead,” Jeremy said.

I started shuffling down the side of the crater sideways. It wasn’t that steep but I was thinking that if I were to get attacked it would be better to get attacked from the side than attacked in the face. You lose an ear and life goes on, you lose a nose and, well, I guess life still goes on.

Anyway, it was a guy down there. How to describe him? He was about as tall as I think of myself as being and built the way I wish I was built. He was shirtless, the way people who look good with their shirts off often are, and there were black smudges all over his body that made him look even more buff than he actually was. It felt like he was showing off just by standing there.

“Hey,” I said. “So was, like, your house here before or something? Was, like, everything you owned and everyone you love obliterated by a catastrophic meteor strike?”

“My name is Jeff,” the guy said. “That’s all I know.”

“Are you thirsty?” I said. “It seems like you could use a beer.”

“What’s beer?” Jeff said.

“You’re going to love it,” I said.

We walked up the side of the crater.

“This is Jeff,” I said to Jeremy. “He doesn’t know what beer is.”

“I wish I was you,” Jeremy said. “It would be like being a baby like if you’d never seen *The Sopranos* and all the joys of life were in front of you instead of behind you.”

We walked down the hill and then across the valley. Jeff had a lot of questions about what the earth was and how it had gotten there. We did our best to explain it to him. It reminded me of when my children were little and curious and I had to tell them to stop asking me questions because it made me feel stupid. I’m a man, not a book! is probably the phrase I have used most in the rearing of my children. That and *No!* Luckily, my kids are now old enough that they look to their phones for the answers to life’s persistent questions instead of interrupting the football game every five minutes.

“After you,” Jeremy said when we reached the gate into his backyard.

Jeff stepped into the yard and stopped just inside the gate to look around.

“It’s alright,” Jeremy said. “This is a safe space.”



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Jeff walked a little further in. He touched the banana tree and the Ficus and ran his fingers along the stucco. When he reached the glass of the patio doors he stopped and stood staring in at our families.

"Look at that," he said.

We came up beside him and looked in.

"What?" I said.

"Look at those beautiful women," he said. "Are those your women?"

"Well, um," I said. "I'm not sure they're exactly, er, I don't know if that's exactly how I'd –"

"Yeah," Jeremy said. "Those are totally our women. The hotter one is mine."

"Felicitations," Jeff said. "Are the babies also yours?"

Laura looked over and saw us and stood up from the couch. She came to the door and opened it.

"What's going on out here?" she said.

Then she saw Jeff.

"Who's your friend?" she said, touching her hair.

"This is Jeff," I said.

"Charmed, I'm sure," Laura said.

She held out her hand to Jeff. He looked at it and then bent down and licked it.

"Hey!" I said. "That's not how we say hello here in Sherman Oaks."

"Sorry," Jeff said.

"You have kind eyes," Laura. "Hey, Alexandra, come meet Jeff."

"No," Jeremy said. "Nope. Don't come meet him."

"Definitely not," I said.

"He's on his way out," Jeremy said.

"I am?" Jeff said.

"You are," I said.

We each took Jeff by an elbow and led him through the gate and out onto the street.

"Get lost," Jeremy said.

"Yeah," I said. "Go find your own women."

"You know what it's like to get tazed?" Jeremy said.

"Tazed?" Jeff said. "What is tazed?"

"Come back and you'll find out," Jeremy said.

"Thank you for your hospitality," Jeff said.

"Get to stepping," I said.

We stood and watched Jeff walk away.

"Some people," Jeremy said.

"The nerve," I said.

We went back into the yard. I opened up the cooler and found a couple cans of Schlitz floating in the melted ice. I took them out and handed one to Jeremy. We sipped our beers and looked through the patio doors at our families.

"Nice night," I said.

This is the first shipment of our **2019 Red Winery**. This is the sixteenth vineyard designation we have bottled from a vineyard we have been farming for fifty years. The beat changes but the song stays the same – this is always a bright



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and balanced incarnation of Cabernet Sauvignon.

The first thing that strikes me about this wine is the smell – it jumped out the moment I pulled the cork. I get violets and black cherry and allspice and cinnamon. It's the kind of aroma that makes you excited to get the wine in a glass and in your mouth. On the palate, it's salty and savory; perhaps the most tannic vintage I have ever tasted from this vineyard. It's delicious right now, but, painful as it is to admit, it needs a few years to show its best. Drink 2025-2040.

We just harvested the 2023 vintage of Merlot a few days ago (yes, in November) from the same block that's given us every vintage of Hawkes Merlot for more than twenty years. Our **2020 Merlot** comes from the same few acres of vines we have been farming in the foothills of the Mayacamas Mountains since 1972. Too much American Merlot is made as poor man's Cabernet. Not this time. What a lovely, floral expression of the varietal. Violets and blueberries and allspice. Not exactly soft, but an easy and pleasing texture. Very drinkable now, but will improve with another few years of aging. Try not to guzzle.

I expect greatness from our Home Chardonnay vineyard and yet, every year at the harvest time, the taste of the raw grapes and the smell of the fermenting wine make me thank my lucky stars all over again. The **2022 Home Chardonnay** tastes even more like Burgundy than usual. That doesn't bother me. This was never meant to taste like a typical California Chardonnay. It is from the same vineyard we have been farming for more than fifty years and the focus is on the grapes, not the process – it doesn't undergo secondary fermentation and is aged in old, neutral barrels to leave the native aroma and flavor intact. The 2022 is at once racy and rich – I get Meyer Lemon, orange blossom, lychee, honey, leavening bread. Meursault, eat your heart out.

The **2019 Alexander Valley Estate Cab** has hit its stride. The fruit aromas that have always been here (my notes include plum and blackberry) are joined now by a little cedar and tobacco. I love these tertiary aromatics and it seems as though they're building almost day by day in this wine. It's got a long way to go – the acid is still ripping and the tannin is still gripping. Yum. Drink yesterday through 2030.

Those of you lucky enough to be signed up for our holiday magnum list have just received a 1.5 liter bottle of our **2017 Alexander Valley Cabernet**. I loved this wine when we were pouring it in the tasting room and I love it still. It's a super aromatic, floral Cabernet. That's a characteristic I typically associate with red fruit driven wines, but the fruit aromas and flavors in this wine are all dark. It's got blueberry and blackberry and plum and cassis. And those same tertiary aromatics I was talking about in the 2019 Alexander Valley Estate are here too, only in greater concentration. Baking spice galore. You probably planned to share this bottle over a Thanksgiving table, but that doesn't mean you have to.

Thank you for your support. – Jake



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