

THE HAWKES WINE CLUB

November 10, 2025

A LETTER TO THE SHAREHOLDERS

"We hit pay dirt on this one," Jeremy said. "It's lattes for life."

"Lattes are gross," I said.

"They're going to rewrite Tomb Raider," Jeremy said. "That's how big this is. You're looking at the next Lara Croft."

I looked over at him. He was wearing a white thermal underwear shirt with a large brown stain on the stomach.

"It's a common misconception that we're still waiting to see the world's first trillionaire," Jeremy said.

"Yeah," I said. "I hear people talking about that all the time."

"Guess who it was?" Jeremy said.

"No," I said.

"I'll give you a hint," Jeremy said.

"I don't want a hint," I said.

"Most commonly depicted in a headdress and loincloth," Jeremy said.

"I said I didn't want a hint," I said.

"Died as a teenager," Jeremy said.

"I give up," I said.

"Tutankhamun," Jeremy said. "King Tut. Net worth, adjusted for inflation, one point four trillion. Conservatively. Although that does include a fairly generous valuation of his personal brand for merchandising purposes – snacks, action figures, etc."

I didn't say anything.

"I know what you're thinking," Jeremy said. "Here I am, a tub of guts with a great smile, pushing fifty years old and living in my uncle's garage, what do I have in common with The Boy King? Talent? Negative. The inheritance of astonishing patrilineal wealth? Not so lucky. Answer? Determination. Grit. It's what sets the great ones apart."

He looked over at me and I looked out the windshield. We were driving down a dirt road, south of Amboy and north of 29 Palms, on a journey to find the lost Something-Or-Other.

There is the stately, picturesque desert of places like Monument Valley or Escalante - typically featuring plenty of red rocks with a green burst of cottonwood here and there – and then there is the kind of desert without any distinguishing characteristics at all, a failure of imagination on the part of God, a beige void. Even the sky was. It was in the east, anyway. It looked like a sandstorm or something was brewing over there. I don't know. Maybe the air was just depressed.

"You don't seem impressed," Jeremy said.

"I miss my television," I said.

"Come on!" Jeremy said, "You don't feel invigorated by the spirit of exploration? Boundless wealth? Get a whiff of that air!"



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He stuck his head out the window and, presumably, inhaled, although it was hard to tell over the wind noise.

"The air is literally full of history!" he shouted. "History! Woo hoo!"

"You're annoying when you're happy," I said.

"Imagine being given the opportunity to be the first white man to see the Pyramids," Jeremy said.

"That sounds both physically and culturally uncomfortable," I said.

"A goldmine is what it sounds like," Jeremy said. "The Manhattan of the Ancient World. How about that?"

"A public transportation system in crisis?" I said. "The worst grocery stores in North America? Guys in fleece stepping over dead bodies to buy shares of Palantir?"

"Cemelleh," Jeremy said. "Say it with me: Ce – Me – Le."

"No," I said.

"It's the Aztec word for peace or tranquility," Jeremy said. "Of, course, we don't actually know what language these people spoke or if it was a language that only existed there and evolved in a sort of hermetic parallel to other native languages of the Americas."

"Can we play the quiet game?" I said.

"Take, for example, the Lakota, Dakota, and Nakota people," Jeremy said. "All contemporaneous inhabitants of Western South Dakota and referred to collectively by the exonym Sioux, which is actually a derivative of an Ojibwe word meaning little snakes. Yes, they spoke a language that was mutually comprehensible, but – "

"I'll give you two–to–one the place doesn't exist," I said.

"Tito says we'll be there by happy hour," Jeremy said.

"The last time we went exploring with Tito," I said. "I had to get my ear sewn back on."

"That was the old Tito," Jeremy said. "The new Tito is very safety–first."

"Does he still wear that leather vest?" I said.

"It's cultural," Jeremy said.

"Because he's from the Isle of Sleaze?" I said.

"Keep talking like that and I'm going to cancel you," Jeremy said.

"Go ahead and try," I said.

"Fine," Jeremy said. "You're canceled. Boom!"

We pulled up in front of a building that belonged in that place – low, confused, made of lumber bearing a resemblance to driftwood, the folly of man returning to the earth. There was Tito, leaning against a motorcycle, wearing his leather vest, smoking a cigarette or whatever. The wind ruffled his mullet and the sand-filled sky swirled behind him, like a misleadingly complicated embodiment of his inner life, which actually revolves around jelly donuts and soccer moms.

I don't just dislike Tito, I resent him. For me, life is a struggle: I bathe, I work, I eat less bacon than I'd like to, I have trouble sleeping, I keep my sexual fantasies to myself and wait patiently for them to expire without expres-

sion. This is a description I imagine could stand in for most flabby, rudderless, middle-aged men determined to do their best for reasons they can't exactly articulate. It could not, however, be used to describe the life of Tito. Tito lived in a single wide with Ellen Barkin in Malibu in 1987, when he was a sophomore in high school. He subsists on cigarettes and Reese's peanut butter cups and looks like a journeyman middleweight with uncharacteristically good fashion sense.

"You ready for enlightenment, Birdman?" Tito said to me by way of greeting.

I don't know why he calls me Birdman.

"Probably not," I said.

"Ready to get rich?" Tito said.

"Yes," I said.

Tito took a map out of his vest and spread it on the hood of the car and pointed things out with a bone handled drop-point. The wind had picked up and me and Jeremy had to hold the map down with both hands while Tito played with the knife. I kept looking down at my hand, wondering how long it would take the pain signal to reach my brain when the point of the knife broke the skin.

We got in the car and headed out. Tito just got in the driver's seat of Jeremy's car and we got in where we fit in, no questions asked. Sitting in the back seat makes me feel like a pissant. The road was getting thinner and the sky was getting sandier. Tito, it strikes me, is the kind of guy who would take the car off a cliff before letting someone else drive. It's the sort of resolve I aspire to but lack the self-confidence to embody. On the bright side, I thought, maybe we'll get in a head-on, Jeremy and Tito will be thrown through the windshield, and my impact will be cushioned by their lifeless bodies. *I loved those guys*, I pictured myself telling strangers in a bar, *they were like brothers to me*. I was sad and strong. They patted me on the back and bought me drinks.

"I think the IP angle is really where we want to focus," Jeremy said. "Spiritual livestream, better living through psychedelics, pre-Colombian minimalist decor design generator, tours at a varied level of involvement ranging from helicopter to spend the night in a shaman's house, etc. Catering TBD. But, let the record reflect that I'm not opposed to good old-fashioned bullion. The big G. I believe it was Jaws The Shark who said 'I like a fortune I can sink my teeth into.' You feel me?"

We were now so completely engulfed in the sandstorm that it was impossible to tell if we were moving or standing still. It was possible to ascertain that Jeremy was shouting, but only by the flapping of his lips and spastic gesticulations. Nothing audible but the screaming wind. It got darker. Sand came through the door seals and rose on the floorboards until it was around our ankles. Eventually, it was dark. I thought I could feel the car filling, sand pressing in on me from all sides, buried, my mouth and eyes filled, the arrival of death experienced as the incremental departure of physical sensation until my body wasn't there anymore and I was just a thought, a single idea, the idea of selfhood, the idea of me, and then that was gone, too, and I didn't exist as a distinct phenomenon of any kind, only as part of some other, larger thing which could be described either as time or nothingness, same thing.

In the last moments of consciousness, I remember a friend of mine, a guy who is very full of crap, but also

legitimately thoughtful and worldly, telling me about going out into the desert and building a fire and eating twenty peyote buttons. Apparently that's a lot. He threw up, of course, and then he lay down by the fire in the dark and when the fire went out, he thought he had died. When the sun came up in the morning and he realized he was alive, it was the funniest thing in the world. Being alive, that is.

As a sort of epilogue or prophecy, I'll offer this:

We all lived and never got anywhere or even experienced any personal growth. The air eventually emptied of sand and either I woke up or else was just able to comfortably open my eyes. The car was buried up to the windows, inside and out. I had to dig out the button to lower the window and, when I tried it, it worked – the window screamed in agony from being full of sand, but it went down, a fact which might have surprised me, if not that it was a Toyota. Jeremy and Tito sat in the front seats with their eyes closed, their faces white with sand. I climbed out of the car and stood on the hood, looking in at them. The existence of my own life seemed to be a kind of miracle and I thought they were probably dead. The thought of being confronted with that certain fact was scary enough to me that I briefly considered walking away and leaving them there, just as a way of avoiding it, but, after a few minutes, I pounded on the windshield and they opened their eyes and rolled down their windows and climbed out of the car. We stood on the sand, looking around. We agreed on a direction, by which I mean Tito decided on a direction, and we set off walking. If you're going to be stuck in the desert, it occurred to me, fall is a good time to do it; the days are mild and the nights, though potentially chilly, are seldom life-threatening.

"A reasonable man can only conclude one thing," Jeremy said. "Divine intervention. God can't stand to see me succeed."

"I'm sure he's watching your every move," I said.

"You know what makes me feel?" Jeremy said. "You know what I respond with? Guess."

I didn't guess.

"Determination!" Jeremy said. "Grit!"

He coughed and spat sand.

"How's my hair?" Tito said.

This shipment marks the maiden voyage of two Hawkes Cabernets: our 2021 Alexander Valley Estate and 2021 Red Winery Single Vineyard. Six months ago, at the beginning of summer, I sat down to taste these wines and agonize uselessly about their impending release. What a different world it would be if I set out each vintage to produce Cabernet that was ready to drink in only a few years. But young smooth wines have never excited me, and it's never been my aspiration to produce them. I tend to like well-made Cabernet better every year for the first twenty years of its life and I tend to make Cabernet that's a little scary until it's five or six. The upshot of all that is, by the time we are ready to stop selling a vintage of Cabernet, I am just coming around to it.

All that said, the 2021's are in a very different place than they were six months ago. I often think that progression of wine looks more like a set of stairs than it does like a curve: up, then stable, then up again, and so on.



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These wines have certainly taken a step or two up the drinkability staircase since June. The 2021 Red Winery is so much smoother it almost feels like a different wine. The 2021 AV is still a raw, dynamic young Cabernet that will benefit from years of aging.

So:

The **2021 Alexander Valley Estate Cabernet** is one-hundred-percent Cabernet Sauvignon and is a blend of fruit from all three of our vineyards – Red Winery, Stone, and Pyramid. The same thing could be said about every vintage of Estate Cabernet we bottle – they're all one hundred percent varietal and they're all blended from the same vineyards – what changes is the proportion of the blend accounted for by each vineyard.

Over fifty percent of 2021 comes from Pyramid, and it shows. This wine is a lot – a lot of fruit, a lot of tannin, a lot of acid. And, while I think it's fair to say that it lacks the poise of the 2020, it has a certain EVERYTHING TURNED UP TO ELEVEN feel that's its own kind of balance. I get cocoa powder and black cherry and a hint of tamari on the nose, a tangy, broad palate full of dark fruit and a tight, even gritty finish. This is a young wine just starting to open up. Give it time to breathe, or better yet, time in the cellar. Or, if you share my lack of patience, give it a crispy, rare, bone-in ribeye and drink it tonight. Drink through 2045.

The **2021 Red Winery Cabernet** has more than a few things in common with that first vintage - like the 2003, it is texturally remarkable - full and long and elegant without ever feeling heavy. It lacks the rough edges that are common and even forgivable in young Cabernet. This mild manner in youth used to concern me - I'd always thought there was a correlation between excess tannin and age-worthiness, but tasting past vintages of Red Winery will teach you otherwise. These wines just ride along on the same long, low wave for decades, getting more interesting all the time.

The 2021 is very fruit-driven. We used an especially light touch with oak here, and I don't detect it as a distinct element in the finished wine - it's all black cherry and violet and cassis. A surprisingly pretty, almost floral aroma. Give it time to open in the glass. The palate is very even - there's not so much an arc here as a steady rise to a sweet, bright, slightly tannic finish. Delicious and with plenty of road ahead of it - drink now through 2045.

I feel very lucky to be shipping our **2021 Estate Merlot** because it's now old enough that it's starting to show what it's capable of. The thing I love most about our Merlot, and what I think grabs our customers' attention, is its aromatics. This is never a brooding, closed wine, as Cabernet can be in its youth. The 2021 Merlot is one of those wines you smell from across the room when the cork is pulled – plum and blackberry and violets and white pepper. It was aged for about eighteen months in old French oak, and the influence of the barrels is minimal, leaving the fruit clear and pure. Soft at the beginning and firm at the end. Drink now through 2030.

This shipment includes our **2023 Home Chardonnay**. It comes, as usual, from the ranch I grew up on, all the way at the southern tip of the Alexander Valley, on a tributary of the Russian River. I was just down there this morning, tasting Chardonnay from this gnarly, old vineyard. The temperature will eventually reach 85 degrees today

but, at 7am, the bottomland along the creek was socked-in. It's an uncharacteristically cool climate for Alexander Valley, and our Chardonnay always reflects that fact – even in ripe, full vintages, there's always a racy, acidic edge to this wine.

The 2023 smells like honeydew and lemon curd and wet slate. It was fermented in stainless steel and aged in neutral French oak barrels and did not undergo malolactic fermentation. Texturally, it feels like Chablis, which is to say focused and crisp, rather than broad and smooth. Does it make sense to describe this as a very linear wine? The acid is mouth-watering. Pairings that jump to mind: poached shrimp, frisée and citrus salad, new Manchego, evening light in the limbs of an oak tree.

Ok, friends, lucky for you, that's about all I got.

Thank you for your support.

– Jake