

## ONE BOTTLE:

# The 2004 Zenato Amarone Classico della Valpolicella

by JOSHUA BAER

Have you ever had sex with someone and felt nothing? Or, worse, have you ever had sex with someone and felt next to nothing?

Have you ever been on your way to the store and woken up an hour later with two bags of groceries in the back seat and no memory of how they got there? Have you ever met a man in his late fifties or early sixties, usually with a head of stringy grey hair pulled back into a ponytail, and known from the moment you shook hands with him that he wanted to strangle you? Have you ever seen an old woman sitting by the bank of a river, looking at her hands, and then walked closer and realized that you were looking at a tree trunk with dead branches piled on top of it?

Have you ever dreamt about the jet that cannot land at the airport, the jet that is flying over a city, trying to find an avenue where it can land?

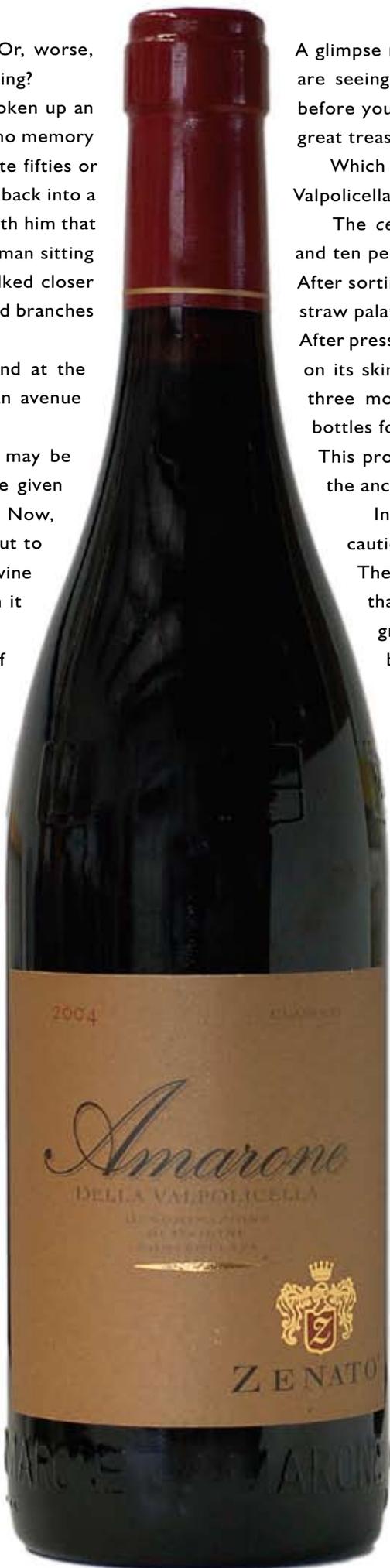
If you answered yes to any of these questions, you may be tempted to think that your soul is at risk. Or, if you are given to despair, you may believe that you have lost your soul. Now, I know what you're thinking. You're thinking that I'm about to tell you about a wine that will restore your soul, or a wine that will go out into the world, find your soul, and return it to you.

I wish I could tell you that. I wish I had that kind of wisdom about the power of wine. The truth is, certain wines may have that kind of power, but even if they do, I do not have that kind of wisdom. At this point, I could wing it and tell you that drinking the right wine will restore your soul, but that would be—at best—an attempt to tell the truth by lying. I may not be wise, but experience has taught me that attempting to tell the truth by lying is a slow, painful form of self-sabotage. Given that we have all had enough self-sabotage to last a lifetime, I'm going to try a different approach.

The difference between you and your soul is like the difference between time and eternity. It is also like the difference between mortality and immortality. The ancient Greeks believed that the gods envied men and women for their mortality. In the same way that men and women found life to be terrifying, even on a good day, the gods found eternity to be tedious, even on a terrifying day.

What the Greeks were getting at with their myths about men, women, and gods was the common ground that exists between eternity and time. The Greek myths about gods meddling in the affairs of men and women boil down to one lesson: Life is neither immortal nor mortal, neither temporal nor eternal. Life is both. For men and women, life is as close as we will get to immortality.

Wine is not a magic elixir. Wine is more like a resting place, an oasis on the way to our ultimate confrontation with emptiness. When we drink wine we do not solve our problems as much as we see them from a different angle. And, if we're lucky, we catch a glimpse of our souls in the process.



A glimpse may not seem like much, but when you consider that you are seeing the immortal part of yourself, the part that was there before you were born and will be there after you die, a glimpse is a great treasure.

Which brings us to the 2004 Zenato Amarone Classico della Valpolicella.

The *cepage* is eighty percent Corvina, ten percent Rondinella, and ten percent Sangiovese. The grapes are picked in early October. After sorting, the grapes with the right degree of ripeness are laid on straw palates in a ventilated room and allowed to raisin until January. After pressing, the juice from the raisined grapes is allowed to ferment on its skins for three weeks. The wine is then refined in tanks for three months, aged in oak barrels for two years, and stored in bottles for at least six months before being released to the market. This process is a modern version of the way wines were made in the ancient world.

In the glass, the 2004 Zenato Amarone is simultaneously cautious and reckless. The color is a deep, dark scarlet. The bouquet suggests that you are about to make a discovery that will bring you face-to-face with the things you take for granted. That discovery may or may not change your life but it will change the way you value yourself. On the palate this wine can be disorienting. If you are used to wines that tell you everything about themselves during the first sip, the 2004 Zenato Amarone will seem like a wine that is withholding information. On the other hand, if you are used to wines that crack jokes and tell stories, you will feel right at home.

The finish is more of a drawing than a painting, more of a dream than a myth. At first, the finish seems like a fragment. Later, toward the end of the bottle, that fragment becomes less jagged and more complete.

Have you ever had the dream about the plane that is on an avenue in a city, surrounded by cars and trucks? This dream is the inverse of the dream about the plane that is looking for a place to land. In this dream, the plane is looking for an open stretch of avenue, a clear place to accelerate and take off. You sit on the plane and wait. You hope the pilot knows what he's doing. You hope that nothing goes wrong during take off and that you and your fellow passengers will survive. You may even say a prayer, asking God for help. Your seat on that plane is the exact location of your soul. ♥

One Bottle is dedicated to the appreciation of good wines and good times, one bottle at a time. The name "One Bottle" and the contents of this column are ©2009 by onebottle.com. Joshua Baer can be reached at [jb@onebottle.com](mailto:jb@onebottle.com).

