

ONE BOTTLE: Los Luceros Hacienda Gin

by JOSHUA BAER

The power of suggestion is a horse-drawn carriage with two horses, a driver who sits at the front of the carriage, and a passenger who sits inside the compartment. Black curtains cover the windows of the compartment. The horses, the driver, and the exterior of the compartment are visible to the naked eye but no one has seen the inside of the compartment and no one has seen the passenger. Four wheels connect the carriage to the road. A pair of harnesses connects the horses to the carriage. Two sets of reins connect the driver to the horses. The driver calls out commands to the horses. The driver receives directions from the passenger but the means of communication between the passenger and the driver is not apparent to the naked eye.

If all goes well, the horses, the carriage, and the driver transport the passenger to the passenger's destination. Some people say that destination is paradise. Other people say it is enlightenment, wisdom, or the peace that surpasses understanding.

Unfortunately, things do not always go according to plan. The horses can ignore the driver's commands and run away with the carriage. The driver can forget to stop and let the horses drink, eat, and rest. If the carriage's axles are neglected, the wheels will come loose and the carriage will collapse. If the reins become too cold, too hot, too wet, or too dry, they will snap. And if the driver misunderstands the passenger's directions, he will follow his own impulses and drive the carriage straight to Hell.

What you just read was a suggestion. What you are reading now is a statement. The difference between a suggestion and a statement is like the difference between falling in love and listening to one of your friends describe how it felt to fall in love. The former changes your life. The latter is a description of an experience that loses its immediacy through the process of being described.

If you take life literally—if you are a person who says, "Truth is the only thing that matters"—then you prefer statements to suggestions. If you approach life figuratively—if you are attracted to constellations, myths, pulses, and seasons—then you prefer suggestions to statements.

For most of human history, the power of suggestion ruled the world. Hunters, shamans, kings, and queens spoke in riddles. Truth lived behind a veil.

These days, the cards are on the table. The power of suggestion is still powerful, but the forces of dominion, finance, and privilege are engaged in a concerted effort to undermine the power of suggestion and claim sovereignty over the world. Journalists, politicians, tycoons, and war criminals use so-called "statements of fact" as propaganda. While there is nothing factual about those statements, they have been repeated so often that they have come to be accepted as facts. "Torture prevents terrorism"; "God wrote the Bible"; "Cutting taxes creates jobs"—these are just a few examples of prejudicial fairy tales masquerading as absolute truths.

Fortunately, the power of suggestion is strong enough to absorb everything in its path. It takes a so-called statement of fact and turns that statement into a suggestion



before the statement can retaliate. Offense becomes defense. Innovation becomes obsolescence. Revolution becomes tradition. The more things change, the more they stay the same.

Which brings us to Los Luceros Hacienda Gin.

Los Luceros is a historic ranch in Alcade, New Mexico. The village of Alcade is forty-five minutes north of Santa Fe. Three years ago, Karen Lubliner, George Schurman, and John Bernasconi founded a company called KGB Spirits in Alcade. They started with a five-gallon still. They now have two stills, a sixteen-plate copper column still for vodka, and an alembic still with a gooseneck and a botanical chamber for whiskey, gin, and liqueurs. KGB's Taos Lightning rye whiskey is already famous. In my opinion, their Hacienda Gin is next.

In the glass, the Hacienda Gin has a quiet, deceptive clarity. You can see through it, but the world on the other side of the glass is not the same as the world on your side. When you drink the gin straight, it has a noble, almost royal bearing. You want to salute it as you taste it. In a Martini, that nobility becomes a frisky gesture. When you taste it, you laugh out loud. In a gin and tonic, the Hacienda's nobility becomes medicinal. With each sip, you thank God (or fate, or evolution) for giving you a mouth, a nose, and a tongue. By the time you reach the bottom of your glass, your body and mind are refreshed.

People who love wine will love Los Luceros Hacienda Gin. At \$40 (at Susan's Fine Wine and Spirits, and at Kaune's Food Town, in Santa Fe), a bottle costs more than a bottle of Tanqueray, Bombay, or Hendrick's, but the Hacienda offers you a regional specificity that the global brands lack. When you taste the Hacienda, you taste a New Mexican *terroir*.

In the late 1960s, I met a dealer in Oriental carpets who told me stories about the carriage, the horses, the driver, and the passenger. As much as I liked the carpet dealer, the combination of his heavily accented English and arcane stories brought me nothing but frustration. One day, after listening to yet another story, I said, "Look, I'm sorry, but you're going to have to tell me what these stories really mean. I can't listen to another one without knowing the truth."

The carpet dealer scratched his ear. "I'll tell you," he said, "but I'm warning you. After you know what they mean, the carriage, the horses, the driver, and the passenger will lose their magic. You won't enjoy them as much as you do now."

"Tell me anyway," I said.

The carpet dealer explained that the carriage was the human body, the horses were our emotions, the driver was the human intellect, and the passenger was the soul. For the last forty years, I have done my best—and have failed miserably—to forget his explanation. My consolation has been my glimpse of the human soul: A secret protected by the illusion of clarity. ♡

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