

Dear Chardonnay,

August 1, 2001

I know the counselor said we shouldn't contact each other during our "cooling off" period, but I couldn't wait anymore. The day you became \$40 a bottle, I swore I'd never drink you again. But that was just the wounded little boy in me talking. Still, I never wanted to be the first one to make contact. In my fantasies, it was always you who would come crawling back to me. I guess my pride needed that. But now I see that my pride's cost me a lot of things. I'm tired of pretending I don't miss you. I don't care about looking bad anymore. I don't care if it's me that makes the first move as long as one of us does. Maybe it's time we let our hearts speak as loudly as our hurt. And this is what my heart says: "There's no one like you, Chardonnay." I look for you in every wine glass and every bottle I see, but they're not you. They're not even close.....

Two weeks ago, I got this little Sauvignon Blanc and brought it home with me. I don't say this to hurt you, but just to illustrate the depth of my desperation. It was young wine with one of those perfect structures that only youth and maybe a perfect microclimate can give. I mean, just perfect. It had length like you wouldn't believe and a taste that just wouldn't quit. Every man's dream, right? But as I sat on the couch being blown away by this stunner, I thought, look at the stuff we've made important in our lives. It's all so superficial. What does a perfect wine mean? Does it make food better? Or does it get better with food?

Well, in this case, yes, but you see what I'm getting at.

Does all this perfection make it a better wine? Does it have a better taste than a moderately attractive Chardonnay? I doubt it. And I never thought I'd say this; I've never really thought about it before. I don't know, maybe I'm just growing up a little.

Later, after I'd tossed that wine around with a delicious John Dory and leeks, I found myself thinking, "Why do I feel so drained and empty?" It wasn't just the flawlessness of the wine or it's promiscuous, shamelessly great taste, but something else. There was some nagging feeling of loss. Why did it feel so incomplete? And then it hit me. It didn't feel the same because you, the chardonnay I always thought I needed, weren't there.

Do you know what I mean? Nothing tastes the same without Chardonnay. Chardonnay, I'm just going crazy without you. And everything I drink just reminds me of you.

Still in denial, I went online to find that Pinot Gris, that "little wine" I picked up at the Holiday Inn lounge last year. Well, I found her and there we were with a cassoulet last week. I figured I wasn't eating right without any Chardonnay around, but boy was I wrong. , I had a few glasses and the next thing you know, I'm eating away, salivating and appreciating every bite as the crisp acidity played with every morsel of this amazing dish. This wine was a total monster in the glass. Here I was with a Pinot Gris that is giving me everything, you know, like a real wine does when it's not hung up about alcohol or oak and whether the "score" is high enough.

But it made me sad, too. Because I couldn't help thinking, "Why didn't my Chardonnay ever explode out of the glass like that?" But I know you can.

It's true, Chardonnay. In your heart you must know it. Don't you think we could start over? Just wipe all the grievances away and start fresh? I think we can. If you feel the same please, please, please let me know.

Otherwise I'm moving on to Grenache Blanc and Riesling.

Doug