

WINE PEOPLE EXCERPT



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In her five years in the wine business, Wren observed many roads into the industry—an affinity for chemistry, history, or travel; an auspicious mix of boredom and family money; unchecked hedonism—but surprisingly few ways out.

Her own path started in fine dining, where she'd spent several years before joining Lionel Garrett Wine Imports. By her account, she had three types of colleagues. Some realized early that the highs of tastings, dinners, and parties weren't worth the endless bureaucracy and physical toll; those people departed for saner industries by age thirty-five. Others stayed in the wine business when they shouldn't, desperate and resolute, their teeth growing ever more stained and their enviable international anecdotes ever longer, until they were gently escorted from the wine business by their spouses, doctors, or AA literature.



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And then, there were the lifers.

Wren knew that she was a lifer. And she knew the rules. Anyone who found a way to stay in wine had to be both romantic and pragmatic, never losing the love of this ancient, changeable substance even as they figured out how to balance its excesses with ruthless physical economies. She nursed the same dream they all did: fifty years in the business and dying upright at the table, a glass of her ideal wine in hand. (The perfect final wine was changeable and an ongoing topic among wine people, who didn't find the conversation morbid.)

Until today she'd thought the owner of Lionel Garrett, Lionel himself, shared that same dream. But then, at a meeting in preparation for everyone's spring buying trips, he'd done something he never had before. He started talking about endings.

