INTRODUCTION

Nothing is made without influence.

No one homemakes anything anymore, and even if they do, do they use packaged ingredients from a box? No one grinds the spelt from the earth, and even if they do, even crops are chemically affected by the thumbprint of the human product.

The water of the earth, the fat trails that grew from willed and pushed their way into and across the world until it was hefty with life now runs over the greasy thumbprint, washing it into it, being being

and product.

A new friend said, at the small rooftop party, in the kitchen, stemming from talking about Perrier, which I said I liked a lot less than La Croix:

“…because it's, like, the cool thing to drink now!”

(normal joke smile)

Over EmphaSizing in tone and volume I pointed my finger out—

I WAS DRINKING IT BEFORE IT WAS COOL!

Prob because this has been a trend in my life. To feel somewhat caught in headlights--the thing I like is a hit, what is my relationship in/to this?

And then out again, back in the dark, the search having moved on.

My love of lo-fi 8-track tape suddenly on the traintracks of washed-out indie pop in 2010; the childhood French bread pizza crumb grit and stormwindow floods of my professional wrestling fixation cast into the spotlight in the late 90s; the diary I kept, those feelings I didn’t know so many of us had,

but had.

A long and storied history somehow feeling--not unappreciated, but untold. Uncoddled.

“I was doing (…) before it was cool.” What a tragedy. That right there’s the only way to know the dead. That something was YOUR thing, MY thing, the thing taken from us. Now who are we, stretched among and through the populace? Now we’re a body of water splashed upon the (…), drying up, and who were we?

What a way to know the dead, the free market capitalism we damn. But damning capitalism is like asking a fish to damn the water in which it swims.

Our supergod, our breathable remaining air, our religion, our imperium, capitalism. Don’t take my drink away from me.

I took a workman's ruck of seltzer down to the river.

La Croix in my lunchbox at 7 years old. My friends called it weird water.

That La Croix has often been my only significant lifeline to healthy foods or drinks, and that it speaks to how I was raised, like I had to character build to outwardly embrace La Croix, and that helped me embrace it inwardly.

“I love my weird water!” My announcements in/between super loud burps. That this was something OK to drink, friends. New friends, old friends. To drink.

You know that personal mythology: the tragedy of the out of touch lunchbox. That sweet heartache that instantly youngs you, the untradeable item, the apparition of the thing you never see on TV.

When you're a kid, exposure is everything.

#LiveLaCroix is the current (as of 8/2015) hashtag La Croix wants users to put on Instagram. That’s because the first layer of the consumer experience is interacting with the brand joyfully, unflinchingly. The layer beneath that is the significance of the ornamental tomb: that the object itself is representative of the life of the consumer, one fitting for them to be buried with/in, even. The third and most significant layer is to dull the crushing tragedy.

You know the one, it has no name.

That's why people like god so much, probably. Or do that (ultimately offensive, IMHO) thing where they create and worship a god in the image of a human being.

There’s just too much false god for us all. Too much,

and not enough embracing of appropriation—

That we are human beings and we appropriate. That we seek the most entertaining level.

Like our waters. Nothing but waters, yeah, that’s what we had to contribute.

Art in life is like dark matter, making up the majority of the universe but being impossible to pinpoint. The function of the text, in this case as the art, is actually, by virtue of being art alone, is to emphasize the chasm experience of distance between the world we live in and the experiencing of art.

That point A is walking down the street, and point Z is seeing the art. What unfurls, that length, that loss, that stop gap, that everything—

LA CROIX TASTES GOOD

La Croix tastes pretty good.

FROM THE AUTHOR’S PERSONAL HISTORY WITH LA CROIX

When I decided I’d make—what the fuck did I call it? An inorganic garden?

Some kind of garden—

an array of cans across my living room floor. Single, dramatically under—or was I full-on at this point?—unemployed. The most lone wolf period of my life, almost exclusively in bad ways. The electricity out and that heat index notwithstanding, a bad time. A time of many motors.

Every La Croix I drank I threw on the floor. There were a lot. I made it about 2 days before I looked at it and said, I’m crazy, I’m

crazy, this needs to stop.

I don’t think anyone ever saw it. I filled a whole industrial black garbage bag.

Actually, I just talked to Alex about this on Facebook, sending her this section of the introduction,

and Alex remembers seeing it. That dented garden. The sound every kick.

Like you

I wonder where the book begins and ends.

Like, for the book is yours.

La Croix allows an unfettered relationship between human being and human product.

LEMON

If only you could have more knuckles. For upon them, you would tattoo upon each hand:

UNDER-RATED // OVER-DEPENDED-UPON

Emotions and emotional states carry us. You get that. You get that there never was salt without a sea. Nutrients vs. every biome. Lemon characterizes everything.

Unflinching belief. Mandalas when your eyes are closed, a real world when they’re opened.

Acolyte, you who goes shopping, you who can drive and wear sunglasses, you who can watch the road and drink,

the world has neglected your poetry for long enough.

Lemon lifer, aloof mainstay as you may be, there’s nothing simplistic about your simplex understanding that everything physical and mental at some point converges in a DNA helix. You’re so good at going with it.

Sour is a cable you trace.

Refreshing is learning new shit.

The only fundamental is survive.

Ok, got that. And here we are.

The rest is wrought with the unwritten.

But there's always room for holy text. Hello? There's always room for stars! They blow up and rebirth constantly. There's always room for holy texts.

No, no fundamentals. Just the universe in macro zooming in until you’re on an atom that’s a universe in micro ad infinitum. That’s the piece our DNA rebels against: There are no human fundamentals. Lemon, if we could all so be into this.

Teach us quietly throughout our lives to unlearn.

From that yellow can you know people must find themselves in the rainbow.

(Projectile net cowling) (Nebula footage) (Light breaking the green forest canopy) (Bubbles in the park) (Washed out photographs of people in bathing suits)

DRINKING ONE NOW, MY EXPERIENCE IS:

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LIME

If anyone knows the heavy burden of leadership’s great machine, it’s you. To love a lime is to invest in the nature of La Croix itself: the delicious human product sourced from nature—isn’t everything naturally occurring if it’s from the earth? The scientific command of flavor—is anything natural when people are involved? Quantum physics, lime lovers ask: A tree falling in the forest, AKA everything, can’t just hinge on human observation, correct? One must assume not, and that one is a leader. You know this duality. The steadfast newsroom runner, the spiritual guru. Leadership is heft.

We were a broken people. Everything has to live up to something we broke. Ourselves. Broke bones, broke skin, broke at the crests. Broke news.

Consider understanding yourself, lime lover, as the tree in the city median eating the sunlight of hot cars, drinking that deep cloudy smell-rain of the low city:

That on the one hand people measure themselves against that divisible neighborhood shape.

But on the other everything can produce a resonant spiritual effect.

Harvest, direct, synthesize. Be a boss. At the end of the day, it is what it is. But don’t

say everything isn’t cosmically venerated.

Everything, lucky factotum, is the mystic sublime.

Actually,

when you're feeling good, the world is a beautiful spiritual place.

When things are bad, the world is a harsh ugly place filled with objects.

(An assembly line of hammers) (A roadside factory in the heather) (Thin clouds cutting swaths of the blue sky) (Inflatable pools in the grass) (The gazebo at the center of a small town square surrounded by a set of shops and grass. The stars above) (The stars) (The

stars)

DRINKING ONE NOW, MY EXPERIENCE IS:

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GRAPEFRUIT

Grapefruit, the icon selling out the stadium and being booed. Grapefruit, the name on the lips. The press, so inviting. Booed by the die-hards, over saturated in the general market climate Grapefruit, the friend out for drinks who just can’t help but correct that grammar mistake, point out that factual inaccuracy in the gripping story. What? You’re helping!

You’re those train tracks that run the living lonely of American lengths making it work at all hours, impossible. But real.

You’re a traditionalist whether you know it or not in the same way white blood cells are: You do your job, and that’s what you do.

You’re everywhere. You’re the bold and massive face of citizenry.

Sometimes you’ll even give the whole “it’s *pamplemousse*” treatment.

There's a problem? You, grapefruit, demand, aloud or to yourself: Let's work for a solution. If only so many of us weren't so complicated as to stand out shining brilliantly, unrelentingly, feverishly, enigmatically in the sun.

The sun that gives

so much favor to some but equality to us all.

Remember,

if you're feeling bothered by this

—and some people get bothered by what they are told they are—

the world couldn't function without you!

What’s a reckless sleepover without a chaperone? Why even bother having a referee if you can’t sneak back into the ring behind their back with a folding chair? Without you, this!

All this, this

would all fall apart!

(A machine singing hit songs from the 90s nonstop) (Road trip in the mid-afternoon) (Paperwork)

(Hands sticky from honey and needing to grab the steering wheel and drive on a hot day)

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APRICOT

Apricot like metallic vines, like tendrils of sickly sweet rind.

A predatory plant that eats every few months. A clearing in the forest through which one might see the stars.   
Apricot like a canopy. Telescopic, observing apricot.

We have got to be so much more than significant images. But to you? Not so much.

It's easy to see why people say language harbors us or fails us. It's the opposite, in fact. Overwhelmingly so. Through Language you do manipulate reality.

Can you fucking believe that stinging words and phrases together can pack such a punch? Yes

you

actually

can.

If someone were to ask if you were a cowboy or an astronaut, you'd have trouble answering; I'm not a cowboy, I’m an old prospector, sunken eyed by the world and pining for gold. I'm not an astronaut, I'm just marooned in space.

Never forget: There is no entropy in whatever garden. Pull up a wooden desk.

This is some very strange juice.

(Hermit crabs) (Dirty old canoes in leaves) (Rabbits hunched over between city housing, eating) (Billboard maintenance men pasting up a billboard for a new movie over the expressway) (Strip-mall kung-fu lessons. Blue vinyl mats. Crowded parking lots of waiting parents)

(Ballet)

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PASSIONFRUIT

Who's spilled liquid in their car, watched it run down seeking the lowest level, disappear slightly in the upholstery, leave that shroud? You likely have,

and you did so on purpose.

It hurts to get scammed. But

there's a beautiful art to scamming people.

Whether you were a teacher by profession or not, you were always teaching, because the questions always bleed through the upholstery, right? There really gets to be a smell to them.

It gets to a point with language where you’d ask your students—you’ll make anyone, anything, wittingly, but especially unwittingly, into your student—

what is language? What defines it? What can language do?

And you’d ask that because you don't know. You liked the answers. Answers aren't anything but a game. You remind us of that every single day.

Bend away from the joint, passionfruit, spiritually, because you always do.

There are so many hearts. The best are the cartoon ones you can wield whim

whammy at the will.

You never come back the way you came. Why would you? You're human. Even the water burbles differently through the tributaries. Even the waves wait patiently and unsuspectingly

for the moon to roll up.

(Canyons, Los Angeles cigarettes) (Animal bloodstain in the forest preserve) (Fruit flies on a full fruit bowl) ((Fabergé eggs) (Expired chicken sausage) (The Hollywood sign) (Splatter art)

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MANGO

O mango!

Mango, you're in touch with that energy of the fish that first crawled out of the sea to live on land. You came out of your zone, tried; you succeeded. You're satisfied. As a person you know that milestones are significant parts of our experience. (Maybe subconsciously you know that.) Checking them off helps you find yourself.

It’s hard to decide, and it’s even harder to always be on. But the questions always lead to more aloud, awake questions, don’t they?

You can and do do

sickly sweet. If offered, you might do

centipede meat.

O mango! To lose one’s face in one’s own hands.

You may struggle with how much you've placed yourself. In fact,

place yourself

further. More embedded.

Say to yourself:

"I am holding in my hands

a book about La Croix.

My feet are on the ground.

Or will be."

(Chain smoking in a neon work vest) (Airplane seats in a green field)

(Gray butterflies) (Playing cards on a concrete basement floor) (Orange cones in the night)

DRINKING ONE NOW, MY EXPERIENCE IS:

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COLA (LaCOLA/NiCOLA)

for Jamie Mortara

You want so much to believe but you can't because

You know the truth. And the truth is two things:

Subjective.

And gets in the way.

“But proof? (PROOF)

Proof is the bottom line / for anyone.”

Paul Simon said that in Rhythm of the Saints.

Wasn’t that such an underrated album?

So you're resigned to the American weirdo. Piles of papers unknown, coke bottle glasses, halogen lighting. That kilter.

There’s no cola aficionado who isn’t an obsessee.

Obsessive isn’t the right moon for that orbit. Not enraptured enough.

It was a stingray’s tail that killed Steve Irwin. The magic bullet in JFK’s head. It was the wooden cross that Christ was hung upon thousands of years ago but it might as well have been yesterday. We always use objects to bring down our myths.

My god

you could run a hundred miles of cable

and never regret it.

Hot tubbing at the community center. Top shelf liquor in the bad part of town. Plastic gold.

You plucky little cadaver that never gave up and it was what it was

At the end of the day.

Cola,

America. This place seems like a great place

To have a complete breakdown.

Nothing should be so simple.

Don't you get it?

Heat accelerates death,

cold prolongs it.

We need a non binary flavor

To carry us into the future.

(Red, white, and blue Popsicles. What do you call them?) (A hammer in the river) (Acid wash) (The universe) (An eye springing open, a popular TV show beginning) (Mountains, streams) (Telephone wire) (Coils of fencing in the dew) (Trailer park phone wires hung with clothes) (Cascading mirrors)

(the the the the universe universe universe universe)

(Long train, tank car after tank car full of corn oil) (Burning bushes)

(Commiserate economy)

DRINKING ONE NOW, MY EXPERIENCE IS:

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