

**A PLAGUE JOURNAL
AT THE IDES OF MARCH, 2020
AND OTHER PANDEMIC POETRY**

QUINN K



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Author's notes

Yet another zine. Bit longer than the previous ones this time.

Started work on it on the Ides of March, 2020, upon the first announcement of my country's COVID19-prevention-lockdown.

Concluded work on it with the first reopening of the Austrian state (among many more to go and come, undoubtedly).

The curve isn't flattened. Our patience grows thin.

Hope you enjoy your scheduled dose of incarcerated anger and despair.

-Quinn K.

Forewords

Vaguely distressing, quite repulsive.

-Quinn K.

We live now through unprecedented times, they lie. But the wizards and clairvoyants I know are strangely... quiet about the new virus, save for a lone unprompted imploration to "be more than you can stand, for the last chance to be anything is already here, and you're going to want the taps to have been all the way open when they're shut off forever." Take that as you will, about the d'être of said magicals if you want to stop there, or if you keep going reading (as I think you should) the inexplicably bigger, blanker, bluer, very reverse of the above coin: Please find here a zine from outside work, which it is about, looking for a switch in the dark and not knowing whether having your eyes open does anything yet, let alone the switch.

-n

Reading was a gut punch I didn't know I needed. My trauma pearls shine under this fierce naked light. I read bubblegum crush for my dearest love, thank you for sharing your pain and love.

-Joanna Loveless

MATTER

I'm getting sick of parties that come
like this. I'm sick of parties.

Critical Mass
Flight Hazards
DO NOT TALK

We will send the police over

SHIT'S UNFINISHED YET

PLAGUE JOURNAL AT THE IDES OF MARCH, 2020

The sound of a piano playing a dirge lies in the air. It was the day before general quarantine measures were implemented by the Austrian government. That same night, for the first time in recent memory, Vienna's stars were visible.

The enemy is invisible.

The following day, law took on a martial shape. It would not reach the 14th district just yet; in the morning people still walked into the mom n pop shop, opened; by nighttime, they yelled at each other from their yards. I ordered medicine.

I am healthy yet.

Nothing much is happening. Normalcy is inaction. Tyrol is blamed for wanting money. Everyone always does.

I am calmer than previously.

A dying fly in the stairwell today. Feels like there are fewer insects in the air. I have not gone out today. Wrote a poem, broke a heart, tried to mend it.

I spread my love wide, yet thin.

90 percent of people believe in the quarantine, a known about which nonbelief shouldn't exist, but does. The infection rate has worsened from a 200% increase per 3 to a mere 2,8 days. 10% will infect 20%, of which the vulnerable will perish. Radio says: "Stay inside and stay healthy."

I am very scared.

Called the disease info hotline. I am not at risk. Those older than myself around me, however, are. This too will pass. This, too, will be past, a dead disease.

Or it will become a new fact of life.

Grocery shopping done, I wait for my paramours.
Desperately aching for human touch in its deepest,
loveliest form. Many seem to feel that way. The same
night, a young man hobbles down the road, unaware of
his surroundings.

The world feels cursed.

Mayors insult their disobedient subjects with good
reason. We are young, but even during a plague, not
invincible. Solidarity, threefold among young, middle-aged
and old is desired, but who knows how bad the cabin-
fevered squabbling will get.

My father's sister, Christine, is sick.

INTERLUDE

Earlier than usual, the sun has gone down. The billboards'
thousand-yard stare faces dead streets; flags are jerked
to and fro atop their poles. Mankind must change its life.

Head empty, life empty, apartment full of tat. I love
everyone who is a part of my life.

Absence makes the heart grow fonder.

Today, for the first time in years, I have not set foot out into the open; used to be due to dysphoria, now the reasons are worse. I worry, but aunt Christine seems to be recovering. Copper pigs calling themselves "nerdy" get drunk on their new emergency powers.

Inexorably, nauseatingly, from hundreds of racing police cars, "I am from Austria" blares.

My projects are beginning to leave a mark on me. I have finished one. The United States has finally implemented measures, strolling in a race against time.

I know at least 4 people infected, and don't know if that is a lot.

A loved one told me they felt they were dying. My resolve has a chip in it, like my tooth. My next project is complete and is merely awaiting more art.

I can only cry tears of inertia.

INTERLUDE

Like wished upon the stars and stripes time and time again, death has come to America, the country leading the world with its infection/mortality rate. A Greek choir would sing of hubris - secretly knowing it plain, unfiltered, disgustingly misanthropic incompetence.

[prematurely concluded here for the sake of my mental health]

OF MORBID HUMOUR

Laughed at a cartoon dog killing cartoon rabbit.
Smothering it.

Called it "morbid humour".

Dark.

Deep.

A hole without visible bottom that you smile at, knowing if
you just set one foot forward, you'd be swallowed.

Knowing,

Death has been ravenous lately, insatiable.

Has humanity in a bear's embrace we shall all face, and
most of us will live,

but some of us will fall to the tune of the jingling in an
unjust few's purses.

Of the projected profits left behind by workless corpses.

Has gripped the vulnerable by the throat and cast them
aside, on a pile of miserable, ended lives stacking further
and further upwards,

but never reaching the soles of our oppressors' shoes to
sully them.

Our wheezing is money. Our commodity has expired.

Our money is percentages rising and falling, multiplying
the lot and dividing the little.

For tis the law of the land: Its lords are fruitless, fruit
trees we water till they have drunk themselves dead, and
us thirsty.

An old joke, all that. But I am of bad humour. Of sad
humour.

And if we don't cast the first stone at those who sin
against us,

We may as well have lost.

Our bodies in bags, our lives in pieces,

Our living kin at borrowed hearths, without us.

We will have decency and compassion,
in these times, so recently ashen.

Our cinders will rain down,
like viral spawn,
like germs.

We, the
many:
listen
to
our
terms.

A FEAST FOR BORIS J.:

Boring, jonesing
For powder, flour, cookie dough

Cough, cuffed in white and blue
Red cross crossed you off the list,
When all else starves for tests.

Your inaction speaks louder
Than your hollow words.
Your dirty hands
Make everyone sick.

May your lungs be ejected
From your governmental body,
Land on the ground, stepped upon
Attempted to be squeezed back
By the Private Health Society
Created by you,
To no avail.

Sail off in your burning ship,
Till she sinks
And sing a shanty you shan't survive.

A STORY ABOUT RAIN

As the legs of a swarm of crane flies, the rain prickles on your skin, trickles along your forearm towards the elbow and drip, drip, drips down to its ultimate destination. Your hand, perhaps unwisely, touches your forehead, rolling beads of sweat off your half-hidden visage in a southward motion.

You seem to be running.

Despite your urgency, you can't shake discomfort at your wet shirt sticking to your front; at your breathing, restricted by the face mask (for the protection of others, not the self); at the droning stream of music in your ears, repeating the mantra: "I see it all, I see it all, I see it all."

You waste a thought to the film "Dancer in the Dark", remembering its director self-described as a nazi; you waste no thought at the bend of a tiny intersection of alleys, running onward towards an unfamiliar goal; you waste away your thoughts with a meditation about the despicable nature of the man who is presently hypnotising you with his voice, speaking the words "I've seen it all, I've seen it all, I've seen it all", and how he has

raped somebody, and how really, you should find someone better to murder your ears with nauseating redundancy during your fugue-state runs.

You haven't left the 14th district of Vienna in soon to be a month and a half.

Glass is always half full.

Your glasses stayed off your face, at home. You are blinking out of rain-dampened eyes (like damn tears) into a world that is too sharp for your imperceptibly slow loss of focus. You used to want to take nice, long strolls - promenades, so to say, or perhaps flaneuring - all without glasses on. Specifically, around Christmas time, when the city would be made of colourful lights, their allure irresistible as the flame is to the moth, or the opioid addict. The world blurs by in a stream of consciousness, your eyes cannot adjust to a thing. The wind's cold is worsened by the rain: Crane fly wings up high beat a stiff gust at you, raising your skin into a bumpy field.

The outside, in general, has become full of crane flies, and all one can hope is to not have inhaled one all too soon.

They make a nest in your lungs. Doctors say that the residual damage from their behaviour within you is potentially chronic.

They say people grow wings from their lungs.

So, instead of flying, you run.

MIND

I'm getting... that some...
like to... parties.

Critical Mass
Flight Hazards
DO NOT TALK

We will send the police over

SHIT'S SUN FINE, VO

BRANE

rains down to a silver lane
panning over, in to sane

growths on arm, discoloration-

i'm insofar that i'm from afar

[train not stopping at this station
i sit and stare from bar to bar
dream of nothing, no relation
between my words and mouth, as tar]

jarring, this. marring, that.

scarring, all among all.

vesuvius, am i here?

pyroclastic flow as response,

annihilation.

VACANCY OR: THE SPACE I TAKE UP

There is no space for you,
less than vacuum.

Vacuous aimlessness,
aiming nonetheless for your shape,
wishing nothingness on you.

You're taking up room,
absorbed by those alike;
your body a reverse-giant,
bursting every gap into overlap,
prompting male reaction-

you little debatable stain,

stay in your lane.

your body's visual size,
matters, without matter
I hate that you're alive,
Please recline into the hole from which you've crawled,
which I fill with cement.

Here, eat another bowl, full-up
of my dissent.

Your voice escalates in my head,
keep it down, low, yet high
keep it quiet.
Lie, or leave it,
stay silent.

You are as God,
(up to interpretation)
yet under Him,
(powerless)
under my scruple.

Where-ever you stand,
you shade me from sun.

Run, imperfect sheep, run.

MUSING

I'm getting cars that come
like the... parties.

Crash Over
Flight Hazard
DO NOT TOUCH

We will send the police over

SHIT'S UNFIRE VO

SOMETHING BORROWED

Life is a borrowed thing.
We borrow it from
God-damn,
thin air,
from our parent's womb
Till the tomb, when it's returned.

The sorrow we borrow,
lends itself to self-destruction
Distraction, self-immolation
Elation from matters, unjustly liked.

For a little part of us wants to be dead,
wants all of us dead, and
off the face of a human world
That is a crying shame.

We are given our name,
and seen this way or that,
but we can't change,
we can't stay here,
and, even looking up
we have no one to blame.

TO SING

A poet here made once these rhymes:
we will, during uneasy times
sing the heavy time away

Yet what's to do, if we should sink,
wilt instead - In purest sound,
a melody of ruin lay?

Should uneasy times yet linger
(lingered long, the prior ways)
Will one then, after their passing,
still know songs from better days?

Disappear'd the world behind our lids,
What should there be left to dream?
Of bullets, sickness, debris-
Can't I just push that aside,

And instead write of beautiful things,
sing of them, suffer slights;
Grief, sorrow
Love, closeness to borrow?

The ropes that bind,
lower hurt and distance, bring
oxytocin and leaks,
song, sound, red cheeks,
They cannot be severed,
even after two years.

We are lacking air to breathe,
and yet our singing still resounds.
Stay in song, birdie, mouse.
Josephine, your people
don't go out.

MUSIC

I'm getting things that some
like to do at parties.

Critical Mass
Flight Hazard
DO NOT TOUCH

We will send the police over

SHIT'S UNFINE, VO

SOUP PT. 1

A beaten-up wave of electrified soup, forming and unforming.

An illusory perpetuality of perception, of the "to be or not to be", the "think; therefore, am".

An abundance of complexes, traumatic change, gradual unfolding in strange chaotic patterns.

An unclear start with a clear stop.

A lack of remembrance of things past and of future possibilities.

Short-sightedness without true light.

Short-circuits without fire caught, just change within a change accelerated.

A distraught blob of saturated jelly, self-perpetuating and pupilating, an escalation from ovulation.

A cancer, born.

A parental embrace from its host.

A parasite symbiotically in love.

...

Does the cuckoo love its foster parents?

Does it have to?

Does it, in turn, have to destroy their trust?

...

No talk of birds.

Just soup, beaten to the air in wave patterns, shaping and unshaping.

Part of a greater organ.

Organismic. Uniformed.

The beating of a heart.

CHAMELEON

My foot falls onto floorboards
Footfalls on the floor of my new home.
In its largest chamber, I settle down
Setting up bedding of twigs and downy feathers
Of lint from cozy woolen sweaters,
Sitting down.

A debt, to be repaid later
Lay in wake for me elsewhere,
I feel its breath in my head,
sucking in air, for my skull to implode, it spoke:
"You've got, you've got,
nothing, you've got, you've got,
to settle up."

Instead, I avoid its vacuum
And find my skin change to the tone of the piece,

Eyes crossed, I melt into the walls of its chambers,
softly beating fast
quickly, ah,
at last.

I lose myself in others' hearts,
For I change my patterns
to their matters,
my brain directed elsewhere,
an arrow of love, of cupid,
stupid.

I can't find my hands no more,
I can't see my reflection,
only dots where my eyes were.
blinking into minus signs,
a toll, a debit,
bit by bit,

I disappear.

I am a concept of I.

I am chameleon.

Listening to: Xiu Xiu Plays the Music from Twin Peaks

The wailing of intently mistreated steel
Angry steam hammering on drums, incessantly
At the request of audience and director
A tuberculoid woman sets her foot to her feet
Dancing errantly, unsure on high- heels

Flashes of bright pink and red
Distract eyes up to heavy attraction
And soon, any visions lie slanted,
Waving to and fro as shaken fire,
waiving attention for entertainment

Unfit in bodies, unfolded in spirit
as though born from inscrutable future
Darkness jumps, erratic, strobe light colours
with the deafening roar of her pulse in her ears

Electric rhythm pounds, her commands from a seer
Her heart forced out for all people to hear...

Past the fears of the lone signposts, looming
The tuberculoid girl still advances
Terrible waves of static scattering
Her image, from which finally, I spring forth.

At the gas stop, I watch dancing twigs,
At the bar, I swig, and smoke cigs
Identify that which is not right,
In this unworldly hyperreal life:

Violence cannot cease without options.
In an unchosen state,
it keeps blossoming more,
Its petals as hogweed sores.

HEART

I'm getting... that some...
like to... parties.

Without Open-
Flight...
DO NOT...
▶

◀ 3

We will send the police over...

SHIT'S UNFIRE VO

A BUBBLEGUM CRUSH

Uh, ahum, mmh, erh, yes

I suppose that

More or less,

I want,

(if such is fine with you)

You, my love,

To kiss me.

Hard.

Careful first,

Slowly, now,

Reckless later

breathless,

All enveloping

Dizzying, wow

A rush to my heart,
A crush on my tongue like a ball of bubblegum

What I want, I cannot confess
It feels too good to say,
All I can manage is
"god, I'm gay"
And lay gentle hands on you,
Waive away my doubt
And caress
More, or less,

All of you,

So - more.

More is what I want,
I want us sore
In the best possible ways.

I've loved you the most
In the fewest days.

I CANNOT SAVE

I cannot save the world

I cannot save my environment

I can not save, here
and recover my progress
whilst the world has regressed,

I can't be safe here.

But I want my loves to be.

I cannot safeguard

My happy people, my chosen family

I cannot extend a net below their feet,

only a rope to tread on, above an abyss, inciting
stumbling.

I cannot save money.

And money is not safe.

I cannot give money,
to those I love the best.

I cannot do so much,

So I'll just have

to do

or give

the rest.

SOUP PT. 2

One needs to be taken away by the waves.

Counted out and back in

stirred in a pot

peer in.

Poor waiter,

stalled and stopped,

in a space between,

unable to move on,

or even move in.

.

Embraces from faces,

do you recognise them?

Embraced from the faced,

do they know your insides?

.

Must be stirred and blended,

blurred, so to stay
with souls
late,
early,
today and tomorrow,
soon;

.

Whom does a cocoon protect?
Isn't it draining for you to spew it?
Does it shut the world out, or fold you up?

.

Sadness throws up into,
the subject,
subjecting themself to help,
the electrified soup of soups,
chunks of you,
beats as hearts.

TIRED AND EMOTIONAL

unworldly words whirling in head
spaces extend past their boundless places
voices pretend, deliberately themselves
expired smiles desire returns to old ways

electronic interface, disregard within
destructive mire, eating its way through skin
illicit feelings elicit distrust
electric sparks with desired touch

what person can so gormlessly say
that bubble gum crushes just go the one way?
who knows the spark yet hates the body?
where goes a disregardful love?

among the trees, into the forest
the trunks bar off a darkness view
threnody resounds as hammers escalate
we commemorate a love, one dead.

HEAD

I'm getting a car that some
like to use for parties.

Critical Mass
Flight Hazard
DO NOT TOUCH

We will send the police over

SHIT'S SUN FINE, VO

TWITCHING,

the willow tree's shrubby branches
reach into a sunless firmament, silver-plattered
Tiny sky, like a lid upon an apartment courtyard
Here, distant birdcalls poured inside
Past the smoke of a building aflame
Welcoming the night, the shrieks descended
Upon the town of the unnamed.
Unnamed had barely just awoken,
with an itch in their chest,
what needed a heavy scratching,
the scratching in the throat of a smoker's cough
A ciggy, or two, or three.
Now alas, their building on fire,
they get a visit
of terrific birdness.

CONNECTICUT:

windmills ill

forlorn will

be still your ilk

weakly till

a strangers kill

weekly soon

sunless moon

deep into-earth

stared beyond june

grass grown tune

septet etiquette

make it anew

plainly in view

what is to do

when care leaves the room?

head to head

body to toe

multifold division woe

lo behold my form

reshaped reborn

A CRICK IN TIME

There once was a head severed fast,
crashing down on the pavement at last.
Oh, how they pray for thee,
Who was murdered with glee
By a corpse that hung high from the mast.

Their eyes leering strangely afar
the townsmen gazed upon it, mouths ajar
It was such on this day
a hanged man went away
And the flagpoles became black as tar.

In the shade of the church tower roof
Stood the vicar distracted, aloof
When his robe was dispersed
by a wind gust most terse
His body was gored to the tooth.

There, the people who found him, aghast;
To others his body was cast.
Piling up to the sky
To the mast hanging high
The ditch filled with corpses too fast.

Another from shadow soon fell,
Next were families on the path from the well.
From twelve hands shrunk to four
Congregation no more
More and further the ditch yet did swell.

The last man alive of the town,
Cast his knife with grip first in the ground.
From the back of a chair
He fell on it to tear
His soul from the place that it bound.

Thus the rotted town lay bare-skinned
as the skinflag on the mast swayed with wind.
Nothing more to adore,
'cept the ground's giant sore,
With a body-boil swollen to the town's rotten sins.

A SCREAM'S TRYPTICH

SCENE:

We move in,
too deep
dive past their voice
hold our breath
and dig,

We swallow up noise
our bile pushed inside, ouroboros style
Twisting the lense closer,
irresistible unearthing
Rapid ululations of the uvula,

Dream ourselves descending a throat
into their screaming jaw

meaningful maw, saw incandescence,
from which we fled, dropping
Deeper, down into darkness

INTERCUT:

Shallow grave from deep sommeil
Clicks inside asthmatic screams
Unawoken, clocklike heart
Discovery sets a search to start
Hands as claws rippling outward

Tragedies distract forever
Letters burrowed under nails
Water every which where
Outgoing gusts of smoking slight
A noose around a neck, too tight

Exiting the wound comes you
The eye pulls back, the gaze escapes
Bursting out with gradual velocity
People shrink and fade away
Emerge inside your nameless frame.

MONTAGE:

Sound escaped, horror stays
snipped apart, glued together
whether image, sound or letter
wheat from chaff is set aside,
soon to burn bright,
soon alight.

River let in, body afloat
claws tear the air,
her mouth opens: da capo ad nauseum:

Earlier than usual, the sun has gone down. The billboards' thousand-yard stare faces dead streets; flags are jerked to and fro atop their poles. Mankind must change its life.

Please find here a zine from outside work which it is about, looking for a switch in the dark and not knowing whether having your eyes open does anything yet, let alone the switch.

-n

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We will send the police over

SHIT SUNNITTE VO