

In Memoriam

twenty twenty



QT
No. 3

FUCK
2020

In Memoriam: *twenty twenty*

February 1st, 2021

Fuck 2020: Leaning into rage, and reflections on the Year From Hell.

For this issue, coherence is secondary to expression. Creatives were invited to submit their drunken scribbles, napkin notes, abandoned song lyrics, half-finished sketches, unsent emails, forgotten plans, and any other unresolved expressions that needed to be excised.

As you make your way through this funeral program, let the readings serve as a laying to rest, a moment to cultivate peace, and an invitation to put the proverbial nail in the coffin of 2020. Conduct the ritual burn by moving through the fire and flames.

Fuck 2020 is composed of works made between January 1st and December 31st, 2020.

To win at life and to win in this competition, you have to be willing to die a thousand deaths and be reborn a thousand times.

RuPaul Charles

In times of crisis, maintaining community is vital. QT brings together our collective projects to create that sense of shared space. Queer Toronto Literary Magazine is a non-profit dedicated to elevating and celebrating queer voices in Canada.

Thank you to all the writers, poets, artists and makers for allowing QT to share your work with the world. Thank you to all the volunteers at QT without whom we would not have a magazine.

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My church

by ALLI

ALLI is a Toronto-based human being who spent the past three years in Manchester, England and will tell this to anyone who'll listen. Wino by nature, writer by habit. Likes all genders and all dogs, but obviously not in the same way.

Dear me-at-twenty,

I miss going to my church. But you, you get to go there, unfettered by the apocalypse upon us. And although I know that this plague too shall pass, I remember the closest I felt to believing in a higher power and it gets me through these dark times.

In that moment of pure ecstasy, standing with my arms raised to the ceiling of the chapel-turned-rave club venue, where we now pray to a new god, hear new hymns and the only holy water is the first cold sip after the first pill hits you, I'm so fucking jealous. You feel like your life has culminated in this moment and it has. But there will be a sequel, and another and another and then suddenly five years have gone by and you're wondering, where did it all go? I think of you and I no longer feel this stab of sadness of days gone by. I feel blessed to have stood in that sacred place, stained glass windows, organ and all. Every pill was a communion

wafer, and the communion wine never ran dry. Our sins melted as soon as the music started and I felt the closest I ever have to a mass of strangers, stood below the new prophet, who stood behind the decks. It's this visceral experience, of feeling whole and holy, of feeling one, of feeling unlimited love. If you asked me what it felt like to feel the touch of god, I would tell you standing in my church, arms raised to the ceiling, singing the hymns of my priest. I would tell you dancing under the ornate ceiling, with no cares in the world. I would tell you hugging one of my best friends, grinning from ear to ear and feeling like we don't need to speak, we both already know. At our prayer, we close our eyes and hope for the next drop to make us feel like we've never felt before. And our wishes are granted. We sing hallelujah. We're all in this spiritual moment together, sharing in this elevated plane of consciousness, where our hearts beat together to the tempo of the bassline.

Five years of tears and laughter, nights out and mornings after. It's been a rollercoaster ride and a half.

You've lost some friends but made way more. I remember those moments at my church, and I think of how lucky I am to have prayed to the gods I did, to feel them touch my heart and ears, to wonder how life might be like if I had never had such a Revelation. My



church has been a place of refuge, moving from venue to venue, but the essence remains. Those moments make me understand that true faith is not believing in someone else's god, it's believing in the power of human connection. My higher power isn't some omnipotent man, it's knowing that the same stardust runs through all our veins and knowing we all experience this world together. I remember reading once that we are just the universe becoming aware of itself and when I was at my church, I felt that more than I have ever felt anywhere else.

So whilst people who look like me are targeted by vitriol and violence in the street and people who look like me watch on doing nothing whilst our black comrades are murdered by police, and whilst the poor get poorer and Jeff Bezos gains billions, whilst people are dying and it is not soldiers but grocery shop workers, care staff, doctors, nurses and paramedics risking their lives each day, and as jokes about banana bread and a man who own tigers that you can't begin to understand become mainstream, you are partying on, in our church, somewhere in the past, eyes closed, heart full, blissfully unaware of what is to be. Savour every moment, and I will live vicariously through your blurry photos and wine-soaked reminiscing over Zoom (you'll understand soon enough). As the world feels dark and messy and uncertain, those moments of joyousness, connection, and hope standing in our church, give me faith that a child like me, who has always felt in-between worlds of black and white, of straight and gay, of immigrant and citizen, can feel at home in a world so desperate to erase her.



So, me-at-twenty, go to church every weekend. Don't let the non-believers tell you any different because in five years' time, when you can't even go outside, hugs feel illegal and a gathering like our church is sinfully selfish, you'll miss the feeling of release and ecstasy that is impossible to describe. When every day is starting to feel like a morning after, you'll need those moments to look forward to, to remember, to revere.

I miss going to my church.

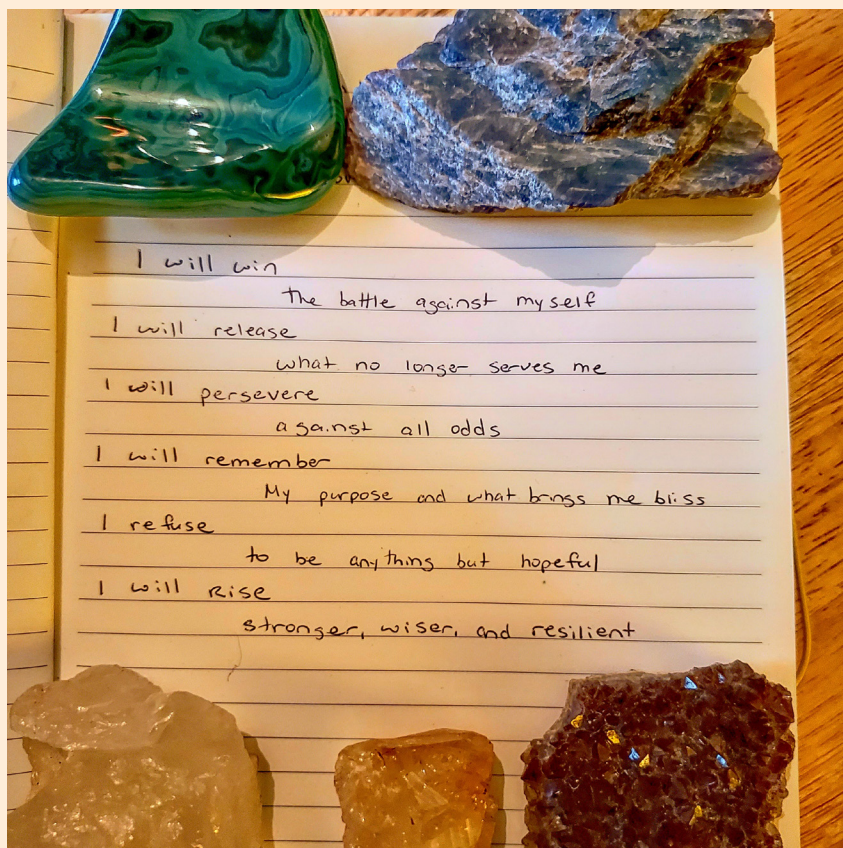
Love always,

A



I Will

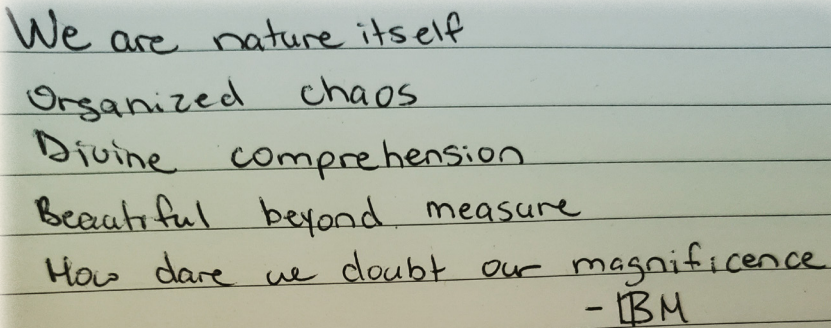
by Brooke Martin



Crystals pictured: top left to right is malachite and labradorite, bottom left to right is clear quartz, citrine, and Thunder Bay amethyst

We Are Nature

by Brooke Martin

A photograph of a piece of lined paper with handwritten text in dark ink. The paper is slightly tilted and has a soft shadow. The text is written in a casual, cursive-like script. The background of the entire page is a warm, golden-brown color with a subtle pattern of dried grass or wheat stalks.

We are nature itself
Organized chaos
Divine comprehension
Beautiful beyond measure
How dare we doubt our magnificence
- IBM

Brooke Martin is a bisexual emergency room and intensive care unit registered nurse. Brooke is an advocate for personal sovereignty, and has ran for member of parliament in her rural riding in the past. She is starting to explore creative writing as a grounding practice and outlet.

Shitty Lyrics

from *whenthecitysleeps*,
Toronto's Newest Queer Artist

*A Toronto-based songwriter, instrumentalist, composer and producer, **whenthecitysleeps** creates a new take on 'late night vibes', blending cinematic synths with modern pop. Drawing inspiration from youthfulness, **whenthecitysleeps** will leave you feeling like you're in a dream. Whatever your story, whoever you are, her music invites you to enjoy the moment.*





Though I didn't know it, it was my last real day of high school. I was sitting in French class as our principal announced that March Break would be extended for another two weeks. Spoiler alert: we never went back.

All four years, I felt extremely out-of-place. I wasn't shy - I just didn't like talking to people. I had interests - but nothing to make a career out of. I was subject to stereotypes and was ultimately pushed onto a path far from my passions. My favourite memories were writing songs in class and listening to music during my spares. It's only now I realize that I felt that way because I was in a box. I continuously took people's bullshit and put a smile on my face to avoid disappointing anyone. Even on days when I felt like crap, it mattered more to me to impress others than to work at my dreams. I hadn't been living for myself.

My first official day out of high school, I said "fuck it". I threw away the perfect image I had spent years curating and began to follow my true passion: music. With all the time quarantine gave me, I learned how to produce my original songs and slowly but surely made my way into the industry. I chose the name "whenthecitysleeps" and got Spotify-certified. The more I created, the more confident I became. 2020 allowed me to put thousands of opinions behind me. It was the biggest "fuck you" moment of my life.

Over time (mostly in high school), I've written a handful of bad song lyrics but I saved them all. I believe that if you look back on your work and hate it, it means you've developed as an artist. My experiences have helped me gain the confidence to put them out into the world. Here are the lyrics that never made the cut:

"When you're near I lose my sense of self
When you're gone I've lost all things else"

"You make my heart beat
You make me feel things
Nobody can think through
Everybody relapses
I always relapse back to you"

"You pulled away too fast
Now I'm left tryna kiss my breath"

“Let’s get lost in a guitar store
All alone”

“I stood by even as you shot me down
Blood splattered like paint upon a once green ground
I wish I could forget how it feels
For the unexpected hold a gun to your face
And shoot a shot that can’t be erased”

“If somebody asked me why I love you,
I’d circle all of the above”

Given the choice, I wouldn’t have done high school any differently. To all artists currently struggling through it, take it one day at a time. You never know what shitty lyrics will come of it.



Lonely Nostalgia

New Year's Day used to be one of my favorite days of the year. The one day of absolutely zero guilt where I could lounge on my couch the entire day binge watching TV, gorging on take-out, and feeling a rare freedom from the suffocating expectations of productivity to prove my value to the world. However, after almost ten months of a once cherished holiday tradition morphing into my daily routine, I can no longer find joy in the comfort of exhausting rest. Much like the craving for an annual slice of cake on my birthday turned to repulsion after having it forced-fed day in and day out, the once decadent sweetness of New Year's Day has grown stale after months of poisoning me with an emptiness that has blended the warmest days of summer into the greyest winter mornings with only my expanding pants size to timestamp it.

Besides spending the morning of January 1st confined to my bed for the first seven hours of the day with a crippling hangover while viewing my friends' and enemies' Instagram stories from the night before or re-watching the Karen Huger press conference episode of *The Real Housewives of Potomac*, New Year's Day also provided me with a solemn moment of reflection from the year past. I often feel like an elderly widow sitting alone on a rocking chair in my Antebellum home lamenting through photo albums of my late husband who died fighting in the Falklands every time I scroll through my camera roll of edited thirst-traps and staged group photos from the past twelve months. These photos, many of whom never saw the light of daymode on my newsfeed, remind me of the good times I experienced that year even when my bad memories try to overshadow them. While most of the time they remind me how much one of my eyes closes significantly more than the other when I smile or that overhead lighting is truly technology's greatest failure, they also remind me that I'm not alone. For every snapshot on my phone is a reminder of a moment in time shared with my loved ones that we attempted to encapsulate our time together as a reminder that joy still does exist on days when it feels impossible to remember it.

**That isn't going
to be the case this
year.**

2020 has been a year that none of us will ever be able to forget yet it is also a year that has given us next to no memories. For whatever goals I had set in motion during the ambitiously warm days of February this year were completely thwarted in the events that would follow in the weeks to come. Every vacation to destinations that still exist but are unreachable; every concert that TicketMaster refuses to refund my ticket to; every romance that never blossomed because you never got that first date; I felt my lust for life sink into a grey purgatory of postponement. The realization that my potential for success in 2020 was lost was like the acceptance that your cat had ran away and wasn't returning; there's no exact event that causes you to reach the ultimate conclusion, you simply wake up one day without hope anymore.

Not to say that life didn't happen for me at all this year during COVID, in fact I experienced some of the most catalyst moments of my life during these trials that forced me to ask myself if I really did wish to continue with life or not. But for myself, as well as with many others who were not able to quarantine with their loved ones, I experienced these moments alone. While it is true that we all do venture through life on our own from the beginning till the end, the most exciting moments we experience between birth and death are seldomly experienced without the presence of others. To share overwhelming emotions of joy, excitement, tragedy, and pain with another person at the same time creates a unifying bond cementing for us what it truly means to be human.

As I sat on my couch day in and day out checking in with my friends by sending them variations of the Gossip Girl "Go-piss-Girl" memes my most passionate of emotions were reduced to variants of iMessage reactions and Wendy Williams gifs. The visceral sounds of my friends' laughter and weeping were substituted by the hollow buzzing of my phone's vibration keeping me company. The lack of milestone life moments such as elaborate birthday parties or holiday

traditions evaporated the very concept of time to me. I remember the events of the Murder Hornets' arrival, Bernie Sanders dropping out of the 2020 Presidential election, and cancelling Tyra Banks over 15+ year old America's Next Top Model clips out of sheer boredom but genuinely could not tell you if these events took place in April or in September. Because when your daily routine consists almost entirely of masturbating and doing the dishes, does it even really matter?

Even when I was lucky enough to find the unexpected moment of joy during lockdown, my inability to share such a warm sentiment with others stripped away the layers of my excitement to merely a flicker of serotonin pumping through my system.

55 **One of the top moments of my
year was during a walk I saw
arguably the most fucking
beautiful raccoon of all time that
I swear on my life was blond.** 55

Even as someone who pretentiously has the title of “writer” in my Instagram bio I am still to this day incapable of putting into words how beautiful both this trashy woodland creature and that moment truly were. No matter how desperately I tried to detail this latchkey moment in my life to my friends over text and zoom they will never be able to fathom the excitement I felt in that moment, and that saddens me.

Nostalgia is the main differentiator between reminiscing vs. mourning when discussing memories. Even the worst remembrances can be transformed into hilarious stories years later when being shared with the people who experienced them with you at the time now with newfound perspectives. But when it is only you by yourself to reflect on, these mementos of the past become deflated into hollow reminders of times past.

I recall last year running into a girl I once went to university with years ago who I had almost completely forgotten about. After we departed I instinctively reached for my phone to message my friends about the unexpected run in and to gossip over the good ol' days of 2013, only to be reminded that I haven't kept in contact with anyone from that chapter of my life. Not a single person I knew had ever met that girl and thus would have no affiliation with this bizarre occurrence in my day. With no one to share this story with, I returned my phone to my pocket and continued on as if this highlight of my week never happened at all. This is the first time I have ever shared this, because when else would I have reason to?

I no longer say “when this is all over” because every day I lose faith that it will ever fully be over, but I will say I look forward to the days when we can talk more candidly about the events that transpired during 2020 without the fear of scrutiny. While events such as the viral video of a New York circuit house party back in May aptly titled by gay twitter as “The Meth Gala” taught many the common sense of discretion under fear of the glower from the public eye, it still did little to prevent people from acting upon their desires for mass social interactions, just without posting it online for once. In the same way we speak now of every cringeworthy moment of our adolescence in middle school with humor that once brought us immense shame, I long for the days that we may humbly admit the secret and questionably legal shenanigans that kept us sane during the gloomiest days of COVID. I don’t believe shame is always necessarily a bad thing, it often at times was the only thing that kept many of us in check during our most desperate moments during lockdown to act within our best judgement. My only hope is that one day, if it’s not too ambitious, that we may look back at our actions, decisions, and memories from this year without feeling the painful burden of guilt for attempting to scrape together some glimpses of hope to convince ourselves that life was worth living when it became a daily internal debate. No one will ever know the joy that I experienced when I saw that beautiful raccoon on my walk, nor will they be able to understand my bafflement running into my former schoolmate at work, but everyone can relate to the depression and dread that I experienced this year not knowing if I would ever be able to make it through it.

And that makes my memories of 2020 feel a little bit less lonely.

*I write to give voices to people who use their passports as ID to get into the club.
Gay Leo who grew up on Toronto Islands who lives life by chasing my dreams
by foot because I don't have a driver's license.*

Steal a Hug – Save a Life.

By Gabriella Marquis

Gabriella is a pansexual, disabled woman from Ontario. She has too many stuffed animals, not enough cats, and has ambitions to be a published novelist.

I am outside my bubble.
I am risking infection.
I am flouting the law.
But I am saving a life.

My best friend's depression is severe.
(Mine isn't too shoot hot, either.)
If I left her alone the whole pandemic
she would surely self-destruct.

That is what I am telling myself, anyway,
when I creep down empty streets to her apartment,
knowing I could infect those in my bubble
by sneaking into someone else's.

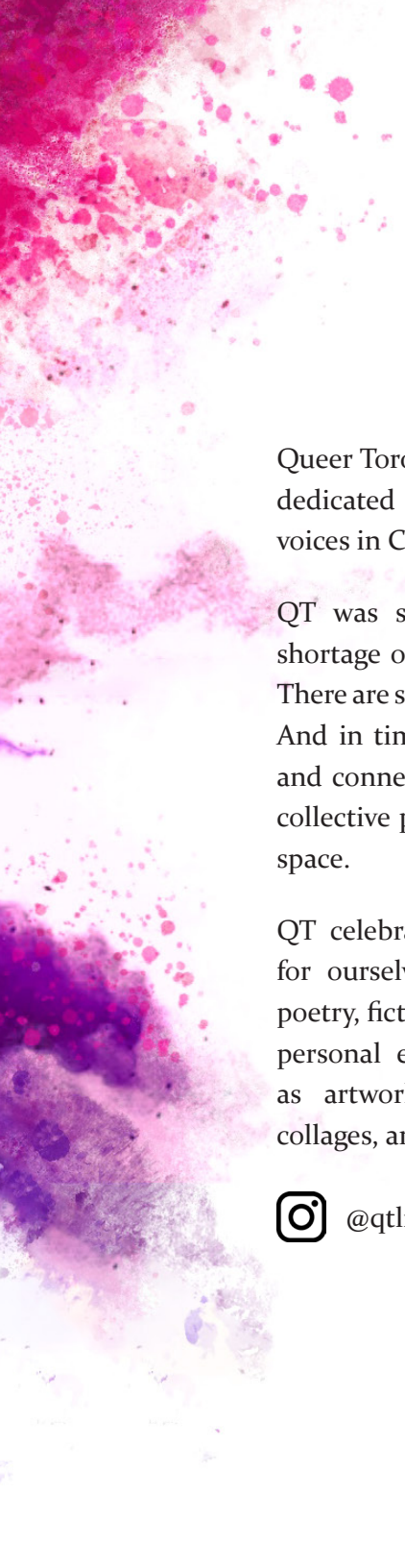
I tell my grandmother I cannot see her
because I have to save my friend.
I am gambling on who would die of loneliness first,
senior citizen judged stronger due to practice.

I am protecting my friend, I say, not myself,
even though I am pretty sure that visiting her
is one of the only things keeping me sane.
But is keeping myself sane a selfish thing to do
in the middle of a pandemic?



QT

Queer Toronto Literary Magazine



Queer Toronto Literary Magazine is a non-profit dedicated to elevating and celebrating queer voices in Canada.

QT was started in response to the criminal shortage of Canadian queer literary magazines. There are so many LGBTQ2SIA+ artists out there! And in times of crisis, maintaining community and connection is vital. QT brings together our collective projects to create that sense of shared space.

QT celebrates the art queer individuals make for ourselves and for each other. We accept poetry, fiction, creative nonfiction, book reviews, personal essays, reflections, memoirs, as well as artwork, drawings, comics, photographs, collages, and other visual media.



@qtlitmag



*In lieu of flowers, we ask that you
instead donate time or funds to a
cause that means something to you*



QT LIST MAG