



THE MOON IS –

a writing game, developed by Ross Sutherland.

You take an adjective and a noun from somewhere in the world. Make them random, and unconnected to each other. Then use them to finish the phrase ‘The Moon is an [adjective] [noun]’. That is your starting point.

In November 2020, I generated a new ‘Moon Is’ writing prompt every day and wrote it in a small notebook. I had that day to write something – a poem or story – that had a maximum size of one page. This zine is a record of all of these, as they were by the end of each day.

I did this in 2018 and 2019, too – you can read those Zines at www.mackenwells.com/moonis

I tweet about it every time I do it under the hashtag #moonvember. Join me in 2021!

Brian Mackenwells



THE MOON IS A FIRST OPAL

When the Moon bellows the ocean moves,
rushes from this coast to that
trained and kept at lunar heel.

It can tendril through the land
rivering tight our soil
with a measured call.

And can even speak sternly to us,
wetfolk that we are,
and pull us upward by the heart.

But it whispers only to you,
Earth's favoured stone,
with your inner
dry tide.

THE MOON IS A COOL CENTURY

We check-in with each other
when it's really cold
and the fog of my breath
clears the air.

More in winter than in summer
but the dark months have more need in them
plus your summers are busy too,
I suppose.

All my life, on these infrequent nights of clarity,
we see that we are both still there
reflecting as much light as we can find
in our orbits.

THE MOON IS A STRONG KITE

The Moon is a strong kite
with a weak string

It
will
al
ways
fly
a
way
from
you
so

hold lightly
move with the wind
and watch

for

g u s t s

November 3

THE MOON IS AN INCREDIBLE CORKSCREW

That night was special. Holy. A miracle.

On the 4th of November 2020 every bottle of wine, champagne, or beer that was opened that night did so without spillage. Without breakage. Every one a satisfying pop. A smooth pour. A perfect head.

Without exception, the best night the planet Earth has ever had (when measured against bottle-opening success rates)

A perfect night.

That nobody even noticed.

THE MOON IS A MELLIFLUOUS LOAN

When you give a gift
you don't really get a say in how it's used.

Part of the gift
is that agency.

Still

I wonder if he'd want it back,
given I mostly know it
from that level in Earthworm Jim on the Sega
Megadrive where Jim is disguised as a blind cave
salamander.

Sorry Ludwig. It's our sonata now.

THE MOON IS A BIG LUXURY

Treat yourself
to a Moon.

Get some friends together
and drink it in.

Although full-fat,
it maintains its lightness.

The cost is high -
a missed chance to swim, perhaps –

But it's worth it
for a cheeky
daytime
nip.

THE MOON IS A FUTURE PASSPORT

Make sure you enter
the other world
when the Moon is full.

The gleam sticks to you
like dust
and makes the creatures sneeze

so you know which spaces
to step around
in the empty wood.

The Moon will not forget a part of itself
so be reassured
your body will return home.

THE MOON IS A POWERFUL CISTERN

It flushes whole oceans away
and spends its months
frustrated
that 'away' is in another ocean.

What else can we do
but admire the futility?

THE MOON IS A SMALL ENGROSSMENT

A deal between an old god
and a new Earth.

The final, lasting reminder
that while, yes, fine, you may have life
which hunts and moons,
and you may look at it,
poke, prod, even visit -
all light
comes
from the same place
and it will have its due
eventually.

THE MOON IS A STRENUOUS SCREAM

I recommend
howling at the Moon.

Not because it is cathartic,
although it is that;
nor does it bring you closer to dogs
(but it may, I haven't asked them);
the old gods are never happy,
so no sense doing it for them;
the Moon cannot hear you,
because of all that vacuum;
and all the rituals to join the tribe
are online now.

No, do it for you
and to scare the neighbours.

THE MOON IS A BRIGHT BROTHER

Bro, the rest of them
the Mercurys, the Europas, the Sun
sunk their chance to shine out,
outshined by our local god
go dark compared to its glow
glowering by themselves since,
sin certain to those other orbs,
(or BS, to you and me)
meanings aplenty can be seen
(see now even now)
no way we write for them
the Moon is.

THE MOON IS A TERRIBLE NOTE

There's a numbness of a sort that hits you, like a great bell has been rung moments ago and the reverberation is drowning out everything else, including yourself.

It's useful, really,
it allows you to get home, unlock the door, feed the cat, move your legs and arms and failing heart.

The trick is not to notice anything too particularly, or the ringing will linger in that object.

If you can't help it, try to pick something you can get rid of, use up.

Not something you'll see every month til you die.
No, not that.

THE MOON IS A SIMPLE ARTIST

Light crudely splashed
turns my cold breath silver sharp -
I can't take it back.

November 13

THE MOON IS A SLOW FOOD

Bury it in the dark for a month.

Take it out to check for rot

only under moonlight

(it does not pay to see

too many of the details)

The poisons will be drawn

into the soil

so plant no seed there.

Eventually it will be inert

and can be warmed up

if you must.

THE MOON IS AN UPWARD CHILD

Useless is the parent who
patiently waits while the child
wills into being a new world
around them and -
rather than helping to paint that
dancing astronaut green and
chugging tree some new shade
hitherto unimagined except
in the eyes and mind of
Linda the duck -
dies of smiling embarrassment.

THE MOON IS A GRANITE TERM

Anything as solidly
real
as the Moon

must disappear
sometimes.

THE MOON IS A SMOKY OCTOPUS

A stone has no ink
no snarl, no stink, no bite.

A stone, alarmed
has no choice but to be
a stone, and act according
to its nature.

THE MOON IS A PHOTOGRAPHIC FOREST

The forest remembers.
It doesn't mention it
at other times,
happy to stay quiet
while the world shouts.
But when the Moon shows
it's safe to talk,
the forest whispers
old memories
of a branch crack
and a hushed movement
just out of sight.

THE MOON IS A PRESENTATIONAL PARAGRAPH

When I know I'll be asked for it
on a phonecall

I write my own name and address down
beforehand.

The small gravity of a moment
can make these solid words
drift away from the surface.

So I don't blame him.
He had nothing to write on,
no notebook or envelope,
just hard vacuum and
a small ladder to negotiate

One small step for
a
man.

THE MOON IS A WELL-BRED WOMAN

A chip off the
old block.
Behind a bright face,
scars hidden
with incredible distance,
a staggering loneliness
reachable only by
our most intrepid.

You get that
from us.

But your momentum
forward
thru uncaring vacuum,
giving what light you can find -
that
that you get from your mother.

THE MOON IS AN ANCIENT CABINET

The trick is to write a thing that lasts long enough to be interesting for that alone.

Let the date carry the words from there, so that they may rest their weary themes, care less about what other people think, and just be.

THE MOON IS A ROCK POSITION

Not yet two, and for her
pebbles hold a sacred geometry.
They are placed precisely
with the care of a poet
whose reference points are unclear
but whose goal is
to affect the universe.

I had thought each composition
was singular
but perhaps there was just one
constantly shifting quotation
of a scarcely glimpsed
truth.

THE MOON IS A SILENT WORK

The slow silent work of the cosmos
spins axis upon axis
Moons rising and falling
as we do
we wax and wane
grow full and eclipsed
but still it moves
eppur si muove
shocks still
as it means we cannot lay
in the darkness of the new Moon
we will move on

November 23

THE MOON IS A CEMENT HOME

The fourth member of the Apollo 11 crew watched the Eagle module take off from the surface of the Moon.

Textbook, he couldn't fault Neil for that. He wondered if Buzz was in on it, Michael definitely was.

Later he found the note Neil left. He didn't read it. There wasn't much time left, and he knew what it said. He knew what he did.

He rested on a ridge and watched the Earth rise. Had this always been the plan? Is that why he had been kept a secret?

He stood up, and picked up another rock.

It was a small comfort to have the last word, he thought to himself, as he continued to spell out "Neil = Arse" on the surface.

THE MOON IS A FIRST-RATE WELTERWEIGHT

The Moon is a first-rate
welterweight
it hits you right out
of the gate
you duck to frustrate
your playmate
but it does not formulate
to a stalemate
in the air, you rotate
to be prostrate
while down you meditate
that they should update

that's amore.

THE MOON IS A PAST LIFE

Every seven years you are made new
your cells wax, wane, and eclipse,
the you of now reflects
the very same light
but the world
has turned
beneath

November 26

THE MOON IS A GNAWED PHYSICIST

Physics is the fundamental science, sure, I get it. Rutherford even said “All science is either Physics or stamp collecting” which, while not painting physicists in a very *likeable* light, does make the point. You can start from scratch – like, the beginning of the Universe scratch – and go from there. It has an inescapable beauty, that idea, a gravity of its own.

But, well, if you insist on making the point by sneaking into the zoo at night to “derive lion-taming from first principles”, then this is the situation you’re going to get.

THE MOON IS A FOLK SOUL

Every night
the Sun
abandons us,
those restless stars
plough right by us
all those supposed planets
glide quietly past us.

Only the Moon
stands by us
Only the Moon
watches over us
Only the Moon
belongs to us.

THE MOON IS A BALANCED HOUSE

We decided to do one of those things where they *move* move your home, you know? Where they literally put your house on a truck? Anyway, we were lucky when it crashed on the bridge, it all held together – but I will admit it does feel precarious, teetering over an abyss like this. But we make it work, we just have to always think of the whole house every second of every day, in case you go to the loo in the top-left of the house without telling the other person to move to the bottom-right and, well, down we'd go into the chaos below. Communication is key, like in all relationships I guess.

THE MOON IS A CROAKY EDITOR

It does not provide full
illumination,
just a glint,
more or less,
as it cuts in and out
every month -
Enough for you to catch
'The Moon is'
without any clear path
to follow next

