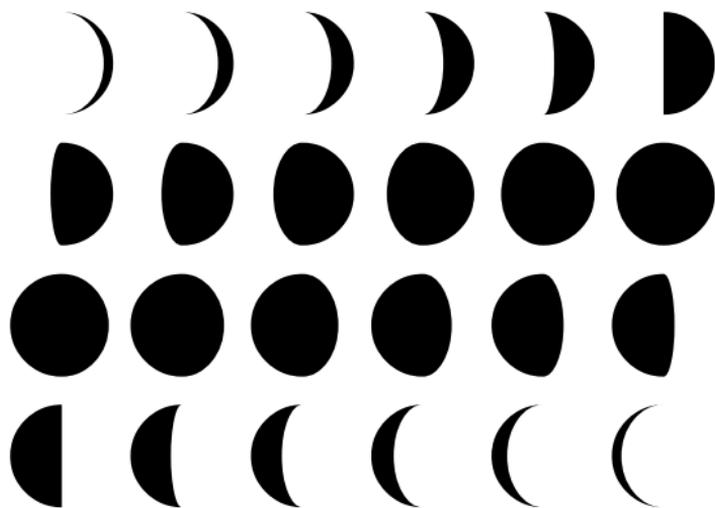


THE

MOON

IS



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 2019, 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 the day.

I did this in 2018, too – you can read that Zine at www.mackenwells.com/moonis

I tweet about it every time I do it under the hashtag #moonvember. Join me in 2020!

Brian Mackenwells

THE MOON IS A STRIPY BADGE

We wear it with pride,
our Moon.
It catches the eye,
like a reverse pizza pie
Uncountable worlds sneak a glimpse,
jealous and wanting one just like it.
When the worlds with twenty see our one
it makes them feel like they've overmooned
and those without any – well.
Their tideless eyes would smile to see it above.

We play it cool.

It sits like a single badge on a smart lapel.
Just so.

THE MOON IS A PICKLED LIGHTHOUSE

There's a protocol, when you find somewhere like that. Infected. And you'll never get the infection out, once conditions are right it'll keep popping up.

They put a lighthouse up, to steer everyone around it. Otherwise 'life' gets into your ship, and before you know it you've traipsed unicellular life across half the milky way. Disgusting.

So, an unchanging Moon is installed. Accurate to within 2mm, it signals to our superior sensors to stay away, while letting the life do...whatever it is that it does.

So long as it doesn't get too scuffed, we shouldn't ever interact. We'll all know to keep our distance.

THE MOON IS AN UNKIND DREAM

It lights the way
to your love
But shadows the dogs from you.

It shows a path
thru sky itself
But makes sure gravity will see you

It silvers roads
like yellow brick
But leaves the house flat on you

It moves you so
in starry night
But still will look down on you.

THE MOON IS A DROPPED BIKE

In the water

 under the railway bridge
at the top of the hill
 left by some tired traveller,

The spinning disc

 catches the light.

Pockmarked all over

 by the impacts of travel
phases of disassembly
 as the month wears on,

The spinning disc

 catches the light.

THE MOON IS A FAST STUDENT

The Moon stares unblinking at the sun
Taking notes
Every impact from every meteor
Leaves its mark

Even our footsteps, long since gone
Remain in place
The Sun may bleach the family picture
But the Moon remembers

It pulls on all of us, bags of water
Gently pulling up
It sees every night time act
And will remember

THE MOON IS A GREEN ZOO

For all we know, under the surface,
a vast verdant land, an impossible collection.
Hulking birds soaring overhead in a way our brains
wouldn't accept.
Beasts unshackled by our gravity, to grow and
grow and grow.

Because who knows, really, what is behind any
face.
How many loose, monstrous things leap around
inside
perhaps given a name, or even a cage.
What strange lunar beauty we hide inside,
awaiting our braver visitors

THE MOON IS A LOST COMFORT

Armstrong couldn't see it, but to Collins
it was clear as night
As soon as they left him, and
he headed down to the dark side
His gloves engineered for warmth
from a small pink blanket
He drifted in filtered air
with the cold tang of damp kitchen
To look thru hardened glass
of the impossibility of endings
Down to that unseen darkness
to maria of a Maria
Infinitely carved ridges,
casting shadows over being completely
and fully held, it's
okay, okay, shh, shh.

THE MOON IS AN APPLIED RESEARCHER

Introduction:

After a thorough review (see Moon, -4bc for initial review outline), it is time directed action is trialled.

Methods:

1. Internal changes to target ape brains with gravitational changes, with goal to make them look up
2. Rearrange Maria on facing side to suggest familiar shapes, eg, ape faces
3. Shine brightly on romantic encounters, to encourage ape procreation/evolution
4. Wait for 1st visitors of evolved apes, who will bring parts of me back
5. Infect and dominate.

THE MOON IS AN UNFORTUNATE CLIENT

I swear it's the time of the month. A full Moon always brings guys like him through my door. Drenched, beaten, and with nothing left to lose. It's like the brightness at night forces them to see things clearly, and they finally act. No space for their anger to hide, so they come to me to find the person to blame.

He leans forward, fidgeting.

"They said they'd make me a star. After what I saw, I'm just gonna be a lifeless body"

It's going to be one of those nights.

THE MOON IS A HUNGRY FLOWER

it awaits the rain, through the drought
those first drops will be heaven
dry earth greedily soaking
taking everything it can
every piece of life
held on to
for dear
life.

THE MOON IS A DESTRUCTIVE ACADEMY

They kept us separate, from everyone. Miles from the nearest town. Just in case. You can't be too careful, even with the mathematicians. We joked that it was in case we divided by zero, but none of us found it funny. It's hard to find humour when you're devoid of social context, cut off. That's really why they isolated the theoretical core – but unlike the nuclear physicists or genetic engineers it wasn't to protect the cities. It was to protect us from remembering what it was like.

So we could do our calculations, forgetting.

THE MOON IS A SEQUENCED HELICOPTER

We understood this beam of light
above us.

It's every part numbered and
ordered.

But every night it hovers above
us

In silent contemplations of our faults
and joys

The parts we know, but
who can tell what the whole is
thinking?

THE MOON IS A FLAVOURSOME INGREDIENT

Take the Moon and boil it down
Not too thick or too runny
Small spikes of grey, you have your noun
From the larder, if gone funny,
Your adjective might play the clown.

Scrunch up your paper and then stew
Stir around with graphite, or pen
Take some out and give a chew
May need salt, or a pinch of cayenne
To make it clear, or even blue.

THE MOON IS A HARD MOTHER

Every new Moon we too find ourselves new
The darkness holds all the potential
Shown inch by inch as the sun hits
Photonic impacts reveal
A familiar crater
Damage not undone
By the darkness
I had hope
would heal
all

THE MOON IS A MAIN STOP

Nobody can resist the temptation.
The chance to have a quick look around.
We've all, every one of us, spent our lives looking
at it.
One small step.
Well, we can decide for ourselves.
See the footsteps.
Some try to leave their own
but of course they can't.
Sit in the Moon buggy and imagine driving
constrained in that suit. Imagine.
Some stay longer, some shorter
but eventually all take one last look
at that beautiful dazzling greyness
and continue on
to the afterlife.

THE MOON IS A LISTED WORD

It's for over 18s only, to be used maybe in situations of extreme...closeness. You wouldn't say the word in polite company, or even refer to it directly unless you were deliberately aiming to shock. Every night is embarrassing, nobody looks up and only people of certain...proclivities become astronomers. Filthy lot. When the –you know- is fully gone, for that one night a month we can all travel with a light heart, a great awkward weight lifted from above our heads. I've heard of some cultures who think it's fine, and that's all very well for them, but here – no. Best not to mention it.

THE MOON IS A SAVED SONG

Sometime
the beat
causes a tide
the gravity
pulls
me forward
and the waters
they rise
up
it overflows
past the barriers
the defences
useless
a wave
I can't control

THE MOON IS AN OPEN CAMERA

Take our small light
squinting
and saying to the universe
“See their small light
each pinprick an earth of its own
thinking I shine just for them
when really
they shine for me, and for each other.
Each earth with a set of
Moons of their own,
orbiting and seeing
themselves as earths
and on
they spin,
orbits infinitely small, but no less
gravity for that”

THE MOON IS A TIRED PALIMPSEST

Every impact leaves its mark, but the marks overlap and the different sized slings and arrows come with different speeds and angles, so the surface becomes a haphazard record of every one, even as they link up, Olympics-like, and cancel out as a big one hits and makes the small ones disappear, only to succumb over time to those small hits itself that fall and fall and fall, just a consequence to being out there, in space, part of the universe, without fail or rest.

THE MOON IS A SECRET FIGHT

A lagrange point is a place of peace.
The push, the pull, the push
tying a knot in space
where things can rest.

Doesn't that sound nice?
An orbit to sit in,
where life's gravity
just leaves you to be.
No energy needed.
No grand collisions.
Just some stasis for a time
until you choose to fire up your boosters
to go boldly again
into the dark.

THE MOON IS A PASSIVE BARRIER

Every time we launched, we landed on the Moon.

This was impossible.

Humanity has sent hundreds of probes out into the solar system - the maths is impeccably, precisely, understood.

It didn't matter.

Millions of tonnes of lift, wasted. We couldn't explain it. We aimed at Mars three times, but somehow the Moon always received us. It just did. The only difference between the probes and our mission was us – a human crew. Somehow the Moon was keeping us contained.

The world began to feel very small.

So we planned our escape.

THE MOON IS A LOST ARCHER

Wet the arrow first, so that her influence will be more keenly felt. Aim high, to her.

Steady. Hold. Breathe out and

- loose.

If the Moon is full, and your aim true, the arrow will land in the next world. The wood of the shaft can make it through, as it too was once alive and is now dead, so carve your message on there. You must not search for your arrow til the next day or you'll fall into the other world yourself. Only the iron head will remain, and you must keep that with you forever, to drive the demons away.

They don't like the living giving their charges hope.

THE MOON IS A COLOURFUL NOTHING

It is not real light, not really.
Real, lyrically speaking, is not reflected
Reflect edgewise on that –
that these second-hand glints
glint sadly on us all
All tired out from their trip
tripped over our rock
rockets passed, left there
therefore forgotten about
A bout with space travel
Travelling to its own end
Ending up looking down
Downwind of the goal.
Go, always, you light
Light what you can
Candle for all of it.

THE MOON IS A RANDOM DEATH

It will be some Moon
that is your last
though you may not know.
A countdown, depending
on how close to the new Moon
your old frame will give out.
Will the Moon know?
Does it stare down, saying goodbye,
obvious from where it sits,
who is about to die?
It's mourning cloak
drawing further over its face
til it can take no more.
Relief, if only for a night?
Goodnight, then, Moon.
I hope I do not have your attention
yet.

THE MOON IS A BOUNDLESS INNOCENCE

The night has terrible purpose
inscrutable features
releases prey from within us
a readiness to leap for the tall grass.
It growls, the night,
a deep throaty noise
that rattles our bones
the bass of it coming from anywhere.
It surrounds and envelops
our sharpened sticks and lookouts
cannot keep it at bay,
relentless, there is no defence.

But you, Moon
You too fight the night
only losing one a month.
A loss we too can suffer.

THE MOON IS AN ENORMOUS JELLYFISH

It's silly, really, that we never noticed. People have been up there and everything – probes orbiting, billions of photos taken. And yet it escaped our notice, red faces all round at NASA I bet.

The museums all banded together, bought that private space flight company, and set to work. Took us by surprise, how powerful they became. Now we all just work for them. Everything in society bent towards one purpose, the crowning achievement of Natural History Museums – making a big enough jar.

THE MOON IS A MODERN PLEDGE

The Moon promises us nothing
Only tides
and a place to store old space stuff.
Everything else is conditional
It meters out the light
Has no opinion on the clouds
or the people underneath.

It keeps its own council
Honest in its indifference.

THE MOON IS A BONDED PRINCESS

It looks
down
austere and distant
admired from below
as it sits
chained in place
visited a handful of times
but still untouched
by the pain
below.

THE MOON IS A PRIVATE AFFIRMATION

The moon is your friend
The moon can see you
The moonshine is yours as well
The moon exerts only a minor influence

The moon does not ask anything of you
The moon does not look at you
The moonshine is not your responsibility
The moon affects your whole body

The moon has no friends
The moon hears no-one's sighs
The moonshine is a message misunderstood
The moon needs you

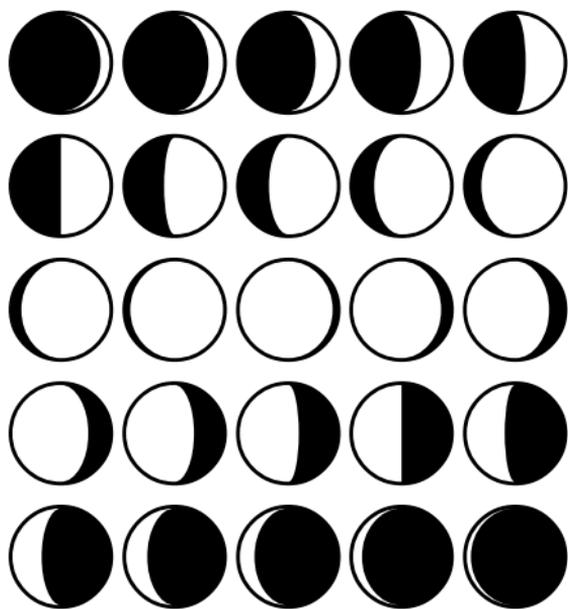
THE MOON IS A BELOVED COPY

Our need was greater. They've stopped visiting their Moon anyway! Our copy is pretty good, warps space in the same way, so I don't know why they'd complain.

Alright, we couldn't get *every* detail right, but what do you expect? So many fiddly craters. Plus, there was all this junk on there, we cleared that away – you're welcome.

But somehow they're all upset, declared war on us to get their stupid Moon back.

The new green on matches their planet better, anyway.



2019