

We are the Moon

~ Natalie Harkin and Leanne Betasamosake Simpson

1.

Bira | moon

one revolution ago we met under a super pink moon i
stepped out from the shadows my face tilted back to soak up
the light a crisp silhouette of a night my world slept
deep toward that transition-time slipping from one fierce day to
the next

zoom-video kicks in before audio our bodies glitch through
time zones my eyes bright you arrive with the sun
and take your first sip of morning tea

we agree on the rising heat and weight of worry the global
pace is quickening to spin-out all our tomorrows we
recognise this fight-flight tremor on the verge feel the
gravitational pull transforming every cell in every living thing our
body we are running somewhere between dogged resolve
trepidation and fatigue and like all the grandmothers before
us who created everything from nothing we know there
is so much work to do so much to do so
Yes we finally say *let's think about the moon*

2.

Dibik Giizis | bira

we are awash in the light of the one who created everything out
of nothing the one who shows up to feed and bath
and caress without fail the one who quiets the fight-
flight sharpens our dogged resolve fuels our fires

we spread out the pieces between us you me Bira 215
empty pairs of makazinan and ten thousand more yet to be
found

we spread the pieces out between us you me Dibik
Giizis we dismantle the foundations burn down the
scaffolding listen for the labour pains of an ancient new

we agree on the rising heat and weight of worry trepidation
and fatigue give way to rehearsals we practice sitting
together and apart but still be still and
still there are these ones that create everything out of
catastrophe

3.

Kardla | fire

one day *Bira* pushed out the tides and rose through the dusk to
bunker the night with barely a trace her darkest side was
revealed a shroud to her glow to honour you our
sorrow

Mississauga Nishnaabeg sister i will light your sacred fire on
beginnings-without-end signal smoke to bend and curl from
gust to squall across all the lands-waters-skies i will exhale
this scent on a cry and a whisper to find you

we know this fallout story too well campfires
fuelled on collective rage and coals stoked red with blood and
memory inhale it all and let our eucalyptus smoke stain
your hair let the finest ash settle your skin we will carry
your breaking hearts keep them beating with our own we
will collect your tears weave every drop back to you when
you can weep no more we will warm you against this chill

sister please know this your every missing child we
love your every precious bone we cradle your every
stolen baby we kiss and at the darkest phase of this
shrouded night our fires will burn and every star will blaze
to guide their spirits home

4.

Shkode | kardla

we gathered at dawn the intersection between rising and
falling tobacco cedar birch and flint baby
sticks at first then the ones for our kids the
exploded hearts of parents and finally those old
ones protecting burning carrying us elsewhere

we put maple candy tiny birch canoes the stick and
bone game we put the words we couldn't form we sang
the prayers we couldn't speak we drummed hoping
they would dance we laughed so they could hear joy

we put band aids and ointment and all the medicines we could
find we put warm coats and boots and rabbit
skin blankets we put mittens and hats and shoes

we put minomiin pickerel and moose meat so they
can feel full we put strawberries raspberries cranberries
and blueberries so they can feel love we put water
from the spring so they can taste freedom

5.

Yarta | earth

she hangs above poised and bearing witness to chaos our
unfailing constant she weathers tides and seasons on the dark
and light of uncertainty in perfect sync with the earth she
agitates terrain to command us a dream a gathering a song our
dust reflected in her light

i remember when we met we balance the big and the small
stuff on this axis of poetry we lean into the pandemic keep
a wellbeing-watch on our teens prowling between four walls in
lockdown *an echo from the past* you say we seek
ancestors' survival-songs from old viral-frontlines see how
they navigated oppression through landscapes of deep
colonialism

we share what grows to keeps us company we smile your
lakes are melting toward the lightness of Spring there is a
window to your garden and we contemplate horizons and ways
to stay earthed *i'm not a gardener* you say yet
here they are the four essentials for daily life sage and
sweetgrass for smudging tobacco for smoking and cedar
for tea campfires and medicine plants to provide and
maintain and heal our everything

our zoom-meet ends and I'm wired sirens and choppers cut
through a typical western-suburb night i step into the cold
and swallow the air body-casting a long stretch of shadow
toward tree-trunks a silhouette of treescapes and rooftops
watch over the city and as i greet my giant lemon-scented gum
we reach for the stars i take a handful of soil grateful
for all that grows and glows to ease the pain of our truth it
is midnight and I wonder what you are thinking i whisper
a half-dream *i'm so tired* *i'm so tired* *i wish*
i was the moon tonight

6.

Aki | yarta

i am thinking:

we are the moon tonight we are each other we are
all we have spread across Aki from Overherero to
Palestine to Narungga to inside my bones

we spread out the pieces between us sewing one to the
next patching and repairing weaving and braiding

we spread out our thoughts like stars in the sky i'm
thinking beside inside alongside

we start again and again in practice of elsewhere we
start over and over in practice of hope

i am thinking:

we are the moon tonight.