Dirt Above, Dirt Below; a guided meditation with Clay AD and Romily Alice Walden

Hello, its wonderful to see you here How was your journey? How is your spirit?

Check in with yourself and where you're at right now. We would love for you to curiously engage but respect your own needs and boundaries during our time together. We want this journey to serve you, so take what you would like and leave the rest. If something is not resonating or working for you either alter the direction or image for yourself or pause the audio and come back later if you'd like. However you move, breathc, ritualize, and connect during this story is right and good. You know what you need.

So ask yourself if its helpful to yourself at this moment:

How is your breathing? Your stomach? Your organs? How does your blood feel moving around in the body that you're living in?

It's been a long time since we met. Put your head down. Shut your eyes. Inhale deeply if you can. How does it feel?

To stretch our your lungs and your ribcage. To expand your diaphragm. To flood all the cells with oxygen.

Alternatively, just become aware of your breathing. All of us who are living are still breathing.

The plants are breathing. The bugs are breathing. The moss is breathing; sucking up moisture from the boundary layer.

Let your body rest on a soft bed of moss. Let your fingertips dig in the damp until you get to the dirt below.

Connect to the parts of the body that are making contact with the ground or a surface. Breathe into these parts and acknowledge the gravity which keeps us connected at all times. Let yourselve feel its heavyness pull on you downwards.

Imagine that you are a rock. Each breath you breathe in stillness, solidity, the touch of wind and time.

A rock on a hillside, large as a car, heavy in the compacted ground. The wind against your edges smoothing you over thousands of years.

A pebble in a current, washed over and touching algae soft.

A stone in the dirt, touched by root, by earthworm, by beetle.

A hagstone on the coast, tumbled into cohabitation with a smaller part, wedged together by the sea, caked in salt.

Steady rocking as the tide moves in and out with the moon.

Stay here a while, as a rock. Allow a rockness to fill you up....

[break]

Dirt above, dirt below.

Do you ever dream of living waste deep in swamp water? Your body acclimatising to the wet. Moving through water, rock, dirt, moss, the body in various forms.

[break]

And now come back to your physical form presently. Touch your skin. Lick your lips. Breathe into your belly and release it. Much has been written of the socialism of the forest floor. Of miles and miles of mycelium connecting tree roots and fungi in vast interdependent communities. Oh that we could be the forest floor.

Imagine the Underlands as that interdependent ecology. Let's not put any limits on our dreaming. Imagined futures can be a beacon we try to follow in the dark. Its hard to hold the light in a time of darkness. Let's not try. We invite you to come into the dirt and the dark and discover what we can build there together in this fertile ground.

Have you anything to offer? Have you any wisdom to share? Any time?

Money? Food? Skills?

To pass along and offer freely. No contribution is too small.

Can you listen? Can you make a spreadsheet? Can you cook a meal? Can you use your magic?

Hold these questions and imagine yourself in a spiralic center of beds, cushions, soft grass and moss -- bodies, human and nonhuman cirling around inward and outward upon the surfaces. Find your place in this spiral. You look up to see the ceiling, made of damp stalagtites, cracks filled with concrete, wheatpasted posters layered and ripped at the edges -- you faintly make out the phrase, "nothing about us without us".

You look to the ground and see its covered in printed pdfs, books, handwritten notes, posters and flyers. The groundcover as an archive. You realise that you are part of a great history, and that you have found somewhere where you belong. You pick up the nearest paper, on it you read:

*We are everywhere these days, wheeling and loping down the street, tapping our canes, sucking on our breathing tubes, following our guide dogs, puffing and sipping on the mouth sticks that propel our motorised chairs. We may drool, hear voices, speak in staccato syllables, wear catheters to collect our urine, or live with a compromised immune system. We are all bound together, not by this list of*

*our collective symptoms but by the social and political circumstances that have forged us as a group. We have found one another and found a voice to express not despair at our fate but outrage at our social positioning. Our symptoms, though sometimes painful, scary, unpleasant, or difficult to manage, are nevertheless part of the dailiness of life. They exist and have existed in all communities throughout time. What we rail against are the strategies used to deprive us of rights, opportunity, and the pursuit of pleasure.\**

Find where in your body those words land. What part of your body do you feel the most intensely right now. See if you can move some of that energy to another part of the body and notice what you feel.

Become aware of the space you are in again. Around you is there is the feeling of a party but also a stillness. Fireflies light up small vignettes of conversations, bodywork exchanges, games, sleep, crystals on eyelids, the small glow of screens. A creative and furtive energy that expresses in sleep and waking. Conversations across quilts in which to get lost and find a new way. A cat, a lizard, a worm; nothing too small to be counted as present.

Take your 5 matches and make 5 wishes:

Close your eyes and take a deep breath. As you strike the match think of your wish, As you exhale, place your match down into your cup of water and say “*so be it*”.

[break]

Here are 5 wishes that we share with you:

1. I wish to be of service, to see how I can be useful to my community and those in need at this time.

2. I wish to do my part in holding myself and those around me accountable for change.

3. I wish for collective care and interdependence, so that we may push against the structural neglect that we are subjected to, and that those who live with multiple marginalised identities experience exponentially.

4. I wish for a different future for sick, disabled and marginalised people, and to be shown how I can help to build it.

5. I wish for healing. For connection with nature and with my community. For a sense of rightness and goodness in whatever body that I live in.

Take your wish water and if you can, pour it out into the ground, into a plant, or out a window.

Whatever the water touches to nourish -- whether it be a plant or its eventual return to the water system of cyclically flowing, evaporating, dissolving -- hold the transformation of the water's form into something new. Learn from that transformation. Give it thanks.

[break]

Wherever you previously were in the spiral find yourself there again. Notice what is happening in the spiral and how you feel after your wishes. You slowly feel a desire growing to explore the space. You begin to slowly travel outwards with the spiral, knowing that if you need to rest or simply want to connect, space will be made for you on the nearest surface. At one point a friendly face offers you a bowl of hot food and you feel the warmth travel through the body.

Can you feel warmth in some part of your body now? Where is it?

At some point you come to a hallway made of ferns, the limits of the walls and ceiling fuzzy, a depth of green all that is felt. The ferns reach out and touch your skin, the plants are ancient, existing long before humans. Beyond the leaves you can sense a presence drawing you in. You pull the leaves back. You find that each fern contains a communication of loving words and guidance from a sick and disabled ancestor [or] person who came before you, welcoming you back home; transmitting to you their story of survival, of joy and brilliance.

What is the message and story they give you?

They ask you where do you find your joy?

Communicate your answer softly.

They ask what brilliance do you offer?

Communicate your answer softly.

Blow the air from your lungs as if to send the answers in the wind.

When you have sent these messages on their way, you follow your breath and move through the hallway into an opening that glows with bioluminescence. You find yourself in a small solitary room, lit with glowing fungus growing from dirt filled with crystals that refract the light like a living disco ball. You are aware of the stillness here, and the quiet. So quiet, that if you chose to, you could listen to your body systems moving and changing within you. You can feel your heart beating, your stomach working within, your blood moving through veins.

Here you can find a calm moment to write a dispatch from the Underlands, to write a love letter to a friend who you cannot see. Take the next few minutes to tell them in text or a voice-note how much you love them. Would you like to hug them? To stroke their hair? To hold their hand? Would you like to share a bath, to hold hands, to share each other's gum? Let's not put limits on our dreaming. We can imagine touch collectively and we can know that we are loved.

[break]

When you finish, slowly exit the solitary glowing room, back through the hallway of ferns, spiralling through the circle to an empty surface on which to rest.

Feel all the parts of your body that are touching whatever surface you find yourself on. Feel the contact of your skin and the pressure between the surface and your body.

From here we will move through a short body scan, participate however is right for you and your body.

Begin by feeling your head, your skull, your face, the neck. Move down through your shoulders, your upper back, lower back, to your abdomen, to your hips, thighs, knees, calves, ankles, feet...

Lie still and observe what is coming up. Allow it to be as much as possible without judgement or reaction.

As we come to the end of our time together, let's think about what comes next. As you find your way out of the Underlands, don't forget that you can always find us again, we will always be here, waiting for you.

In the mean time, we send you wishes for sleep. For restoration. For moments of stillness within your body. We send you wishes for connection. For community. For a feeling of usefulness and change.

The sick and disabled have always lived in the undergrowth, in the Underlands, turning scraps into scaffolds, forging connections in the dark and out of sight. We invite you. We ask you in. We want to show you:

Your weakness is powerful. Your hopelessness allows others to bring you hope. Your exhaustion lets us nourish you. Your survival skills have equipped you with resources that you can share.

There is space for you here: to dream of more just futures: to scheme those into being: to hold those who need your support.

We wish you a restorative sleep, and the power to fight for a better world when you wake.

\*quote from: *Claiming Disability: Knowledge and Identity*, Simi Linton