

Bless Our Lucky Stars Episode 11: The Lofty Perch & The Lonely Path

[Video Description: Lukayo, a nonbinary person of colour, has long curly black hair with a shaved undercut, and teal lipstick, with the symbol of Capricorn painted in white lipliner on their bottom lip. The frames for their glasses are patterned like silver-gold glitter, and the lenses are tinted violet. They are wearing a black t-shirt with white astrological designs on it, and a black baseball cap with the Kind Space logo in white (an asterisk in front of the word “kind”). Behind them are woven rattan dividers partially covered in two malongs, a specific kind of Filipino cloth, and a sculpture-painting depicting the sun and moon. The first malong is mostly purple (but also yellow, red, blue, pink, and orange), and the second has a rainbow-like colour scheme with intricate geometric designs. Throughout the video, Lukayo plays a bamboo mouth harp and tells a story, while gesturing with their hands and making movements with their head.]

[Intro of live music from a bamboo mouth harp]

[Invocation]

To the land that cradles this body, this voice
To the city that covers it, by force or by choice
To the earth, with its quaking, its growth and its joys
I thank you

To the ancestors' blood that runs in my veins
Be they baker or banker or criminals chained
Bikol poets unknown or Kadugnung's great fame
I thank you

To the Anishinaabe, The First of this Land
The original sovereignty for whom I stand
To each Two Spirit person, each woman, each man
I thank you

To the founders of hip hop and modern spoken word
To Black culture's impact on the poetry world
To Black liberation that helped me be heard
I thank you

To Diwata, Bathala, Creator, Divine
To the spirits the guard me, the 6 that are mine
To Gugurang, St. Brigid, and angels so kind
I thank you

To Kind Space and my co-workers for making the call

To our sacred tools and technology for bridging our walls
To frontliners, caregivers, those protecting us all,
I thank you

To the audience members who lend me their ears
To my family that support me year after year
To all those whose influence I hold so dear
I thank you

To the Land, to the Art, to the Spirit, to the Flesh
To the Word, to the Voice, to the Stage, to the Quest

All I have is my thanks and this promise to give
That as long as I breathe, as long as I live
When you support or honour or influence my craft
I will pay it forward. I will always give back.

There's no end to my thanks but our time is still young, so
Welcome to my mind, to my heart, to the show.

[Introduction]

Mabuhay. I'm Lukayo, of the Bikol people. My pronouns are they/them/their. And this is Bless Our Lucky Stars, an astrology and storytelling series live-streamed over Facebook by Kind Space, a 2SLGBTQ+ community organization located on unceded and unsundered Algonquin territory, in the National Capital Region of Canada.

I just played for you my ku'bing, a bamboo mouth harp, and recited an invocation, both in honour of my ancestry and of storytelling. Also as part of my storytelling protocol, if you're going to share with others these original tales I created, please remember to ask my permission first and to credit me when you share them.

If you have any questions, comments, or suggestions, email me at Lukayo@Kindspace.ca.

And now, onto the story.

[The Story: The Lofty Perch & The Lonely Path]

The Lofty Perch & The Lonely Path

A long time ago, in the Sky World, when Earth was a woman who had just returned from lengthy travels and studies abroad, she gently told everyone at her welcome home party that she had learned and experienced so much, she needed time to be by herself and sort out how she

wanted to use that knowledge, how she wanted to contribute to the village, and everyone around her.

So with her loved ones' blessings, she retreated to a nearby mountaintop by her village, and built a small hut there, kneeling on the hard rock in deep contemplation. In her solitude, she re-oriented herself to the principles that were honed and tested throughout her life and throughout her travels, committing herself to her purpose and the people she knew she could serve with everything that was already inside her.

Once she felt that inner alignment, she was ready to ensure her deeds and external life matched what felt true for her. For this, she returned to her village and began the process of becoming a council member. At first, she merely worked hard and diligently, taking responsibility both for the brilliant ideas she used to have, as well as the harm she had caused previously. Much of her work was regaining trust and repairing the ways she had manipulated power, instead focusing now on how to make the council more efficient, and how to organize the whole village to use the council as an essential service for the growth and dreams of the people.

When the time came for her village to elect a new leader with the blessing of the council of elders, Earth did not actually put her name forward. The election of the village leader was held every few years during a village hall meeting where as many villagers as possible could attend.

As a council member, Earth ensured that she would be there, and gave her reasoned support or practical opinion on each of the candidates that put themselves forward, including their own plans about expanding the village.

One candidate, slightly exasperated, asked: "Well, what would you do, then, Earth?"

After a moment's pause, Earth gathers her thoughts and confidently explains what she would do, and how she would expand the village into a town through re-routing certain funds out of projects that the village didn't really want anymore but was doing out of tradition or obligation, and using those funds to build new infrastructure. She would then create trade agreements based on these infrastructures to sustain the capacity of the town.

The whole town hall was astonished. The candidate stood up and said: "I vote to elect Earth as our new village leader."

Earth opened her mouth to decline, but the cry was taken up by so many people that she closed her mouth again. So by the end of the meeting, she found herself on bended knee, and taking the oath of leadership.

Months pass, and one day Earth finds herself in her office, staring at a painting of a mountain on her wall, and the stack of paperwork on her desk. Her schedule book is also open beside her and she is filled with so much dread it brings her to her knees.

She had done it-- she had transformed her village into a large and prosperous town, and the townspeople were ecstatic at her leadership. But her schedule was filled with appointments where she was just meant to show up, smile, and shake someone's hand or, even worse, show up and apologize for a decision town council had made without her or before she even started office. Even though she was proud of everything that she had helped accomplish to this point, so many of her projects were stalled because of the bureaucracy of the town council in preventing so many of her trade agreements.

Earth wanted to shake, and cry, and scream... but instead, she stared at that painting and felt all her emotions shrink, pushed down deep inside herself, while something else expanded outward, something else grew. She knew then, what needed to be done. She needed to become the mountain.

And so it was done. Earth made a series of policy changes that seemed innocuous at first, but eventually, when taken together, allowed her to declare absolute authority during a town hall meeting, having arranged all the seats ahead of time so that it was no longer a circle. Instead, her chair, the biggest, was at the very front, like a throne, and everyone else's chair was facing her.

In shock, the town council could only carry out her next orders, which involved sending delegations to the surrounding villages with new and better trade proposals. Many of the villages were already in agreements with Earth's town, but she took it to another level. Almost immediately, a delegation from a neighbouring village was sent in response to her proposal, the representative almost shouting at her.

"This is ridiculous! We've read your document thoroughly, and you're asking us to submit to this town's authority over our own leadership or you'll cut off trade from you and any of your allies! Why would you do this? You're basically asking us to bend the knee!"

"I am the mountain," Earth stated coldly. "Either do it or be gone from my sight."

The village representative froze, and then slowly, dejectedly, knelt.

The town grows and expands, but there is no joy in the streets, there is no cheer in the people's hearts. Nothing is allowed without Earth's approval, and those who disobeyed were exiled. After she crushed the first uprising with hired mercenaries, those close to her had had enough. She came home, and the house was empty. She went to her parents' home, and her siblings', and they refused to answer the door. They would not take her calls.

One night, she finds herself, again, in her office, knee-deep in paperwork, staring at the painting on her wall. She stays there long into the night, alone, deep in thought.

In the morning, she is gone. The town council members find all the papers signed for the restoration of the council system, the welcome and pardon of any exiled rebels, and the release of surrounding villages from the town's authority while proposing a more equitable trade agreement. They also found a note, with her apology, her breakdown and issues with how policies had set her up as a figurehead, and that she needed to take accountability for what she'd done. For her crimes, Earth exiled herself to the mountain.

That is where Sun, Moon, and Star, her three siblings, eventually find her, after a month of being in exile, and the town liberating itself from her tyrannical rule. Earth is in her mountaintop hut when she turns to see her siblings in the doorway. She falls to her knees at the sight of them, silently overcome with emotion. Moon and Star go to her, while Sun crosses their arms.

"You didn't come to me," Sun said passionately, angrily. "You bottled it up inside again."

"You're right," Earth sighed. "I bottled it up inside, and I felt out of control, so I tried to get more of it... more control... and it wasn't enough... it was never enough..."

"What did you feel so out of control about?" Sun prodded.

"The whole... leader thing. I thought, when they elected me, that this was it. This was my destiny, what everything in my life had been moving towards up to this point. But then, I started to realize that I felt... illegitimate. I hated how fake it was, that I was a figurehead, that I was mostly just playing a part that wasn't truly me."

"And instead of leaving, you just held on tighter."

"Yes. I thought if I completely took over, I wouldn't be playing a part. I would be the mountain, I would be the absolute ruler. But I lost everything close to me. I couldn't stop this unbearable loneliness."

Sun knelt down beside Earth, placing their hands on her knees. "That is because destiny isn't what other people ask you to be, Earth. It's about the part only you can play, grown and built from all your experiences, your inner knowing, that finds expression out in the world. It's a part that cannot be taken or stolen, because you're the only one that can do it. That's how you know it's legitimate. That's how you know it's your destiny. When you die, it dies with you."

Right after Sun's speech, there is a knock on Earth's door, and the four siblings turn to see a representative of the town council there with a letter. It was from town council. They had deliberated for weeks and asked her to be a teacher and advisor-in-exile. They recognized that, despite all she had done, she really had built the town into a glorious new age, and it was also unaccountable of her to not continue the work of sustainability and abandon the town, taking all her skills and knowledge with her, without passing it down to new town council members. As the messenger waited for her response, the siblings could already tell in the way Earth's knees did

not knock, in the way she stood up firmly, that she would take the offer. Earth knew that this was something only she could do, based on everything she already was. It wasn't the highest status position, or the most interesting, or the most fun, but it expressed her values and her inner self. She knew that in this role, she would not feel like an impostor.

"Yes," she replied. "I'm ready to fulfill my destiny."

[*Story Analysis*]

In this story, we learned one of the 12 Elementals of the Earth and the 10th Lesson of the Sun, and the body part it's attached to. Let's break it all down!

The Element of the Earth we were introduced to was the Mountain. Its Latin name in Hellenistic Astrology is Capricorn. Those gifted with the Mountain in their chart have blessings around integrity, solitude, self-discipline, and practicality.

However, like in the story, when Earth's self-discipline instead became emotional repression, she became incredibly lonely, and through that loneliness, grew into a tyrant. It's important for those influenced by the Mountain to not confuse self-control with controlling, or solitude with loneliness. Like Sun admonished Earth for, Earth needed to rely on those around her she trusted, sharing and expressing her feelings, so that she could make the right decisions.

The 10th Lesson of the Sun is Destiny. In Hellenistic Astrology, this is known as the 10th House, or the Midheaven-- the highest point in the sky. This Lesson teaches us about how we can find a personally satisfying role in our community, how our public identity is created, and how we feel like we are fulfilling our destiny.

In the story, Earth had already gotten to know herself very well, and felt like being the village leader was what she was meant to be based on all her skills and knowledge and experience. Yet she still felt like an impostor. Sun explained the 10th Lesson through their talk with Earth, by pointing out that Earth did not bring the full force of who she was into her role, and she had allowed herself to play the part instead of leaving it to find something that allowed for the complete expression of her essence. Sun explained that exerting more control on a tenuous position creates an unjust and false authority, and if she wanted to fulfill her destiny, Earth needed to achieve the natural authority of expressing what she alone can do.

Every single one of us has this Elemental and this Lesson in our chart, even if it doesn't influence us as deeply as others. But it also is part of our bodies, since we are the Children of the Earth. And the Mountain and the 10th Lesson are connected to our knees. This is the part that represents responsibility, stability, and mobility-- it must carry the weight of the body above it, while also moving it forward, which is why it's the largest joints in the body.

When your knees crack or ache or get bruised from falling on them, like Earth's did, you can ask yourself: "Am I forcing people to bend the knee to me? Am I knee-deep in a public role that doesn't suit me? Are my knees knocking and I am taking on more work instead of reaching out to others? Is this a knee-jerk reaction or am I fulfilling my destiny?"

[Closing]

Thank you for watching. Gugurang Mabalos. I am your storyteller, Lukayo. I'll be back next week for another celestial tale. Until then-- bless our lucky stars! Bye!