

the forecast

Lila Bristol

the first time we changed the weather, noone blinked, because noone knew.

two girls huddled in the back corner of the last car
on the green line.
rolling west.

they wrote slowly into a small, square napkin,
waiting between bumps to add two or three shaky letters
t
to
to a l
to a li
to a line.

it was like the construction of this little verse was the most important task in the
world.
and it was,
in the end.

“4 hours to goooo”
the first girl belted out,
side-eyeing the napkin lyrics
though she knew every word by heart.

“4 hours to goooo”
sang the second,
her voice rising quickly to meet her girlfriend’s
in a dark blue harmony.

“if your wash day’s only an hooooooooour”
both voices floated together now,

one quivering boldly above the other,
insistent on melancholy.

“don’t talk to us noooo moooooooooo”
the train shot out of the tunnel,
into the severe brightness of a sunny morning.

as their voices lingered on the final note,
both girls collapsed into laughter and into each other.
they did not notice what flashed across the sky,
temporarily swallowing the clouds.

a single sheet of lightning on a clear, blue day.

after that,
every time after that train ride,
whenever we put words into the world

(a book an essay an album a script a song a chorus a cheer a chant a “rant” a
poem a podcast a call for action a call to action a—
you know what i mean right?
the things we produce so brilliantly?
the things we create to reimagine the world?
the things without adequate compensation? without permission or recognition
or reparations?
so,
i guess what i’m saying is,
all the things)

the weather changes.

you remember right?
last summer in Flint?
after some residents wrote that book about survival in a state-sanctioned
genocide?
when it rained for weeks?
and then someone checked?
and all the rainwater was clean?

you remember right?
over winter in Baltimore?
after Nikole Hannah-Jones wrote those essays about how school taught her
babies the meaning of the word “value”?
by making them wear their coats and gloves and hats and boots and scarves
inside their schools that noone would heat?
and then a warm wind blew every day until april?
but only through the windows of the cold schools?

you remember right?
in September a few years back?
after Solange released her fourth studio album?
All the Seats?
and the entire country was filled with columns of sun that somehow followed
and blessed only the listeners who *understood*?

for all the ways this moment seems different,
it is probably also the very same.
they are still helpfully suggesting that
what we should probably do is hold back maybe
restrain the output, for now,
in the name of “safety” and “mutual respect” and my personal favourite
“weather stability.”

but for all the ways this moment seems different,
it is probably also the very same
because we still do not believe in lies
that seek to outline the shape of our freedom.

it's just like that saying
you know how it goes:
we will never stop building what we deserve.

oh—you never heard that one?