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JILLIAN CHRISTMAS

NORTHERN LIGHT

Stepping off the plane in Whitehorse
the last thing I expect to feel
is home
not quite alone
but close enough
here in this great black north.
As we drive away from the airport
Chris points out the window
That's Antoinette's, Caribbean food
if you're feeling in need of a pick-me-up.
She's from Tobago.
And I'm not sure if he knows
it’s the same island that bred these bones,
that just the song of its name
is home.
What strange things are we
Creatures of the Diaspora,
treasures of the Caribbean Sea,
knocking our knees together in parkas
teeth chattering
where the thin trees stretch high the heavens
to seek the queerest light?
What strange escapes have we made
to want to call this place home?
And I do.
I do
feel the ghosts
of women not unlike us,
whose resilience and fortitude
pulled more than gold and dust and opportunity
from this blistering cold.
I am told the Alaska Highway
was an engineering feat
constructed under the doubt
and bloody weight of Jim Crow.
What strange things are we
that we see a barrier
but build a road?

I know this to be true:
There is not always a way around,
but I promise you a way through
if we can remember both the haunted
and the Hunters,
if we can be courageous enough to dig
into the depths of humane capabilities,
stretch our capacities for tolerance and love.
How strange and brave are we?
It's winter here
yet it feels like everywhere,
the world is turning cold and stark.
Oh nation,
who will birth this light
work, build, nurture, fight
for a place we can all call home
regardless of difference,
celebrate our place in this shared story,
this fierce resistance?
Some think the dark is full of terrors
because they cannot see what it conceals
or perhaps they do not know
that the dark itself is a precious gift
and we, strange creatures of the shimmering north,
can be the light that it reveals.