



Summer (Painting, 9" x 12") Belle Weng

i am going to

by Addy Eby

i can raise my voice an octave
and soften my tone
in a way it was not naturally
meant to do
i can straighten my hair back neat
and contour my nose

but no matter how hard
i strain my vocal cords
i will sound more aggressive to you
and no matter how uncoiled my hair is
and thin the bridge of
my nose appears
i will always have an angrier look

i can emphasize my words
never let the all
fall off an alright
leaving me saying ight
i can lengthen my sentences
and never let a "i am going to"
slip into an "i'm finna"
i can refuse the dialect
that so many of the greatest
black writers and singers
found their success in
because no matter how many hearts they reached
and worlds they changed
Langston Hughes would've sounded better
if he was a lot less ghetto

see i can spend all this time correcting myself
before i've even spoke
to sound less abrasive
i can minimize
the features that relate me to my sisters
to be more comfortable for you too look at

and i can refrain from using words
that make you feel excluded
because that is much more important
than me reclaiming my people's history
but at the end of the day despite
all the energy i put into
worrying about your
general comfortability
forget my own
there will always be an african
before my american
i will always be seen as aggressive
and therefore unprofessional
i will always sound stupid
in a way that you probably think
you know i won't amount to much

i will always be overestimated
when people ask me to do their hair
and not even considered
when there is a problem that everyone else
hasn't been able to crack
an x that he could not solve for
but is written and circled
at the bottom of my page

but i am okay being underestimated for now
seen as another black girl
with a wide nose
and an empty skull

really its ight
i just don't want anyone to forget
what they saw
when they see
how far i'm finna go

