Summer Storms

The most heavy handed stress metaphor you've ever read

Jul 18, 2025

Hi there,

It is hurricane season here in the southeastern US. That means that there is almost always rain in the forecast and for each day that it doesn’t rain, you can feel the storm growing. The air is thick and sticky. The pavement steams. The clouds get darker by the day. Some days, we’ll get a light summer sprinkle. Then it breaks open.

Generally, I like a good storm. I grew up in a rainforest. I got used to consistent heavy rains. I remember sitting in high school classes and watching the sky open up and drench the pavement between school buildings. A good storm can cool things off a little bit. It feels like a release of pressure. Recently though, storms have been feeling scarier. Flooding in my area and across the American South reminded me that what initially felt like an atmospheric vibe session is actually something potentially catastrophic.

This may contain: a woman standing next to a bike in the middle of a field with flowers on it

BrittanyKellerArt

Before I go any further — lets do the housekeeping.

First, if you are not already a subscriber and you resonate with any of the following descriptors, consider joining the cooperative: (1) Early-career professional; (2) Feminist; (3) Do-gooder; (4) Former Gifted Kid; (5) Overachiever; or (6) Capitalism-hater.

Second, if you like what I am saying and it makes you think of someone in your family/office/friend group, send it their way.

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Third, I say some personal and vulnerable shit every week. Say some vulnerable shit back. It’s called a community.

Leave a comment

Okay — back to it.

Allow me to extend this metaphor.

This summer, I have been struggling with my workflow easing to a trickle. Growing up as a super ambitious overachiever, I developed a lot of shame around not working. I really took capitalism to heart. Not working feels like I am letting my team down and wasting my managers time. It feels like I don’t deserve my pay check.

On the other hand, I hate capitalism—really and truly. The 5-day/8-hr work week is a silly hangover from the industrial revolution that does not actually factor in human productivity, particularly in the digital age. Wages are so blatantly arbitrary—it makes no sense that as a white collar worker who sends emails all day, I end up making more than child care workers, receptionists, and cashiers. It makes even less sense that if I do my job in support of a social mission, I will make less than if I do it in pursuit of draining the world of its natural resources or fostering addiction in children (social media).

So we have our players—our water vapor and our temperature differential, if we return to our rain metaphor—in my internalized capitalism and my deep wariness over the capitalistic system. This pressure mounts day by day as I sit in my little grey cubicle. It mounts as I take a break to walk my dog on my work-from-home days (and on my summer Fridays off).

[I think that COVID deprived a generation of young workers of the understanding that you are allowed to slow down while you are in the office too. That’s a topic for another day.]

Then, just like a summer storm, the pressure breaks and I pick a side—or I get exhausted and by choosing rest, I am picking a side—capitalism or anti-capitalism. Interestingly, I don’t always choose anti-capitalism, as much as my values would push me in that direction. Sometimes I choose to take on as much work as I can find in order to allow myself to feel productive again. That’s what happened this week.

Over the last month of slow days, I have got more and more jittery. In the last couple of weeks, I have been actively picking up tasks as they are being thrown out to the team. I talked to my managers and begged them for work. I talked to my coworkers and offered support. I let the work come in and then let the productive energy pour out of me like rain onto each of the tasks on my list.

Storms can feel good. High productivity can feel good. Both can be necessary for our ability to thrive and even function. Our ecosystem struggles in drought. Our sense of self and value within a community struggle when we are not engaging with it through constructive labor.

I liked the storm this week. I needed the rush of productivity. I needed to feel useful.

Floods are dangerous though. It is easy for me to lose track of how much productivity is healthy for me. I can catch myself working through lunch breaks, not taking moments to disconnect from my work, working late, or falling asleep thinking about a work problem. Even worse, I can hold onto the energy of productivity and turn it into stress energy.

I spent today exhausted. After a week of productivity, I ran out of my productive energy. I overstressed myself. It flooded.

CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS

Hi there! Remember a while back when I shared this letter from my friend? I would love to keep the From a Friend series going.

If you want to challenge yourself to write a letter to the Femme Futures community, please reach out to me. I am happy to be sent completed works or to help you brainstorm a piece.

There are no age/gender/occupation restrictions.

Looking forward to hearing from you!

<3 Zoe

I want to point out that while I was exhausted, I was not burnt out. In the metaphor, it flooded, but only a couple of inches in the garage. It wasn’t the end of the world—it was inconvenient. It is also a good reminder to not store your electronics in the garage. I can take steps to make sure that I am safe in case I run into this productivity overdrive again, like taking a mental health day, going outside, or being with people that bring me back to myself.

Rest and productivity need to exist in the same system, especially for those of us who err on the side of hyper-productivity. I don’t want you to walk away from this note thinking that we should be afraid of the rain. Productivity is not a bad thing. For me, it is one of the major ways that I find meaning in my life. Even so, it is a risk to each of us if we are unable to take the right precautions.

I want you to think about your flood strategies this week. How are you implementing safeguards so that you can enjoy the rain without fearing the flooding?

I would love to hear your answers!

Have a great week ahead,

Zoe