

Noel Quiñones

PERMISSION

With lines from "Inside a Suicide Prevention Center in Puerto Rico," a New York Times documentary

You have my permission to grieve.

If I hear wind, I might think they're on a balcony
How long have you wanted to hurt yourself?
We all want to escape but there is no map.

If I hear wind, I might think they're on a balcony
when I say Puerto Rico. I mean an opening in the skin
I want to escape from but there is no map.
This type of call is very common.

When I say Puerto Rico I mean an opening in the skin
where gold turns green under my scalp.
This type of call is very common,
María, like a buzzsaw, shaving off the top of the island

where gold turns green under my scalp.
She says *Yo quiero volar*. To fly. And she will do it
like a buzzsaw, shaving the top half of the sky.
This is part of the process, I cannot let you go.

Yo quiero volar. To escape. And I will do it
if no one can remember my name.
This is part of the process, I cannot let you go
until you feel like you are suffocating.

If no one can remember my name
it means another Hurricane has come.
I feel like I am suffocating
but sometimes I just can't find the words

to name another Hurricane.
I sing *Despierta Borinqueño, de ese sueño*
but sometimes I just can't recall the words
in 119 syllables.

Despierta Borinqueño, de ese sueño
you have my permission to grieve.
In 119 syllables, tell me
how long have you wanted to hurt yourself?

—*from Poets Respond*
January 23, 2018

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