

the independence
(of puerto rico)¹

for sandy

our enemies sharpen our sadness and bury it
in our desire to fight back.

if you ever loved against should
(despite regret's hangover);
if you saw the dark forest and kept walking
(despite every horror flick);
if you took the light risk and swam
where you saw no bottom;
if you drank until you cried for your abuser;
if you left them;
if you avoided the doctor and went to the beach;
if you voted against your parents;
if you broke a simple rule,
stole toilet paper,
ran the stop sign that said coca cola,
if you had a few and went home,
ate insalubrious oysters,
then you understand.

you busted your head,
they broke your heart,
they killed your yearning,
you made indelible mistakes,
you got sick far from the hospital,
you lost friends,
you almost died,
maybe you died,
but that can happen to you at home
watching netflix and eating popcorn.

so get to work fixing tomorrow's roads.
eat what you want at all hours.
tell your mother about the abuse.
leave the closet and record videos

¹ from the book *before island is volcano* (forthcoming)

(even if they shoot you down in santurce).
confront the governor.

cook for your corillo
and may it be immense:
a people outside a people.
move away (but come back).
we live under fascism.
do you think you can avoid pain?

defend your joy.
re-appropriate your resources.
occupy all the buildings
and, when they come evict you,
tell them they can't, who are they
with their mundane dictatorships,
seriously, who are they?

if you took the cautious path,
they still exploited you,
they humiliated you at the bank,
they ironed your bills,
they translated you,
they spit in your coffee,
they gave you a natural death
and you were good your whole life.
you won't lose what you don't have.
we live on stolen time.