

## **This sacred and tangled forest**

There were shadows on both lungs, bronchioles leafing out of season.

Hearing you were ill again, people at work

would ask me how you were. Like a fool, I would try

to answer fully and honestly every time,

trying to translate what it is like to be dying too early,

while still wanting to ignite the sky and see every feather

beyond the birds. I couldn't tell them that we were both floating,

both on fire, the world wobbly with no horizon,

beautiful and strange, and I didn't know where to hide

all this grief at breaktime. Steroids had you swaying

at the top of branches that were already broken,

being pushed by clouds further down, across, up –

You told me I was the only thing keeping you alive,

what I couldn't say was what I wanted:

*to be free from this sacred and tangled forest.*

*to be free from this sacred and tangled forest;*

what I couldn't say was what I wanted –

You told me I was the only thing keeping you alive,

being pushed by clouds further down, across, up

to the top of branches that were already broken.

All this grief at breaktime. Steroids had you swaying

beautiful and strange, and I didn't know where to hide,

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while still wanting to ignite the sky and see every feather,

trying to translate what it is like to be dying too early.

To answer fully and honestly every time.

They would ask me how you were, and like a fool, I would try –

hearing you were ill again – to tell people at work

there were shadows on both lungs, bronchioles leafing out of season.

