



Buen Consejo (Good Advice)

This yew tree of an abuela
creaks over to me.

She's gnarled everywhere and dragging her feet
when she taps my shoulder with a challenge:
to answer her in Spanish,

as though I carry my brown skin
like a picnic blanket to sit on when the ground is rough.

And because I prune trees
just like this every day I reply,

Si, senora. En que te puedo ayudar?

And her branches sag, in disappointment or relief,
as her interrogations drop
between us like old, fat apples:

¿Y tu nombre? Allison. ¿Y tu padres? Hondureños. ¿Y Has ido?
No, I've never been.

Puedo decirte algo? Sí, señora.
Y quedamos amigas? We can still be friends, señora.

Then she leans in, crackling, and tells me how bright
my blooms could be, how she can see it in my pretty face

¡Que brillante! ¡Que delicada!... If only you would just lose weight.

And even though I want to climb to the top of her brittle crown,
to rattle every last leaf free from her branches... I just smile.

And because I live in a forest
of abuelas, and tías and girl cousins
and because my mother is a sequoia,

I say, Gracias, señora. For the good advice.