

Instructions on Not Giving Up by Ada Limon

Academy of American Poets · Ada Limón: "Instructions on Not Giving Up"

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More than the fuchsia funnels breaking out
of the crabapple tree, more than the neighbor's
almost obscene display of cherry limbs shoving
their cotton candy-colored blossoms to the slate
sky of Spring rains, it's the greening of the trees
that really gets to me. When all the shock of white
and taffy, the world's baubles and trinkets, leave
the pavement strewn with the confetti of aftermath,
the leaves come. Patient, plodding, a green skin
growing over whatever winter did to us, a return
to the strange idea of continuous living despite
the mess of us, the hurt, the empty. Fine then,
I'll take it, the tree seems to say, a new slick leaf
unfurling like a fist to an open palm, I'll take it all.

It was a hard winter. My whole body raged against it. But right as the world feels uninhabitable, something miraculous happens: the trees come back. I wanted to praise

that ordinary thing as a way of bringing myself back too.