

## “Shortcut” by Elise Brand, Chicago

Shortcut

Reaching for rigid branches that cause your fingers to ache.  
Standing on a limb that can support your weight.

Barely.

You stretch yourself to snapping point, throw your legs

up,

up,

up.

Only to feel them crash

down,

down,

down.

Suddenly you see a shortcut.

A branch strong, yet so hard to see.

You slide forward, pulling yourself up and...

Yes!

You reach the top, sun peeking through the clouds,  
bliss blossoming through your body.

But then, there's always getting  
down.