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The Last Page

Khundi

1.

Will insects inherit the earth with their high-pitched screams? In the jungle of the low Himalayas, they teem in millions, blaring. The epiphyte-bearing trees

spread their heavy arms. A leaden, leaky sky leaches the soil, fattens the green, sheer escarpments plummeting down. Above, unseen, glaciers melt. Streams rip boulders from their banks.

2.

At the two-room guesthouse in Khundi, a toddler shoots a pink plastic whirligig that spins into the thick, dingy air. He grins, freed from lessons, in the delight of flight,

of making fly, as the saucer, made in China, spirals out of routine through the green world. Some leaves whorl down into gray, moldering graveyards of leaves. In another world,

his father builds glass towers in Dubai. Here, his mother tends their meager, eked-out plot where rainbows of potatoes, squash, clematis, and orange and carmine marigolds bloom.

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