

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.

Gregory Shaffer