

KAVEH BASSIRI
Invention of Country

Years before you were gone, I buried your uniform
in a chest camouflaged as a scarab, its wings latched.

Now, I can't find it anymore. I should have memorized
the atomic number of sidewalks, the gender of doors

on Pahlavi Street, walked between news columns,
read the vines scrawled on the brick wall.

But I don't trust flat surfaces;
from a distance everything turns scenic.

I know the earth is round, and if we continue falling,
the afternoon's revolution never grows cold.

The yellow oaks are wounded;
their fruits surround them like shotgun shells.

I put one against my ear to hear the penance of the forest.
I track the footprints on the blackboard's plain,

round up the shadows peeled off branches.
I must have been a great collector once.

In the cellar hides a clutch of bandaged boxes with open mouths,
we recognize them by their exuvia.

Someone said they identified you by your blue socks
and porcelain inlays. The ants must have heard. They came in.

Their excuse is that they can't rest in the compound light outside.
The fig trees in the cabal stopped delivering fruits.

The terrace watching over the pond is getting smaller.
I'm going back today with my chemistry set devising a playground

for dew worms and Bedouin snails. Surely they can find you
among weeds in the sandpit, the briary fleece of the hills.