

I GO TO THE BACKYARD TO PICK MINT LEAVES FOR MY MOTHER

Today, my mouth fell
wide when I saw the light
slip into the hills, and those boys

I grew up with did not
come back. Or, so I hear. Mama
would often ask me to gather

the mint leaves from behind our home,
and so I would leave for this
nectar — without it, there is nothing sweet

to speak of. I pray that
when I am gone, my people speak
as sweetly of me as I do of them.

I see us, often, steeped
in the land and hope that
a shore remains

a shore — not a place to become
yesterday. The girls have joined the boys
now — all of them

tucked just beyond
the earth. But I know they wouldn't run
from their mothers — not without a fight,

a chase, a hunt, a honey, a home
for the tea to settle; a haven
for us to return to.