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Her Grip

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Her Grip

David Schelhaas

This morning we pulled the beets.
For over a month now they had been preening,
their glossy green, red-veined leaves,
like peacocks at the zoo.
Yet even in their gaudy
glory how slight their hold on earth—we tip
them out of the soil as if they're tired of it
and want to know what comes next.

Later this week my wife
will make pickled beets using a recipe
she learned from her mother, who died
last summer at 93, so frail and wan at the end,
but still clutching life so tightly
it took all the strength
old man pneumonia could muster
to unclasp her hands.