A Home Within the Chest  
By Ethan R. Sellers

Mechanical thunder rumbles up the hillside.  
Trucks carry foreign doctors to our village.  
Dust billows & lifts upwards, mingling with dirt & pollen  
I upturn in tending to my crops.

An ache has grown within my gums,  
a seed dropped by birds in a field it shouldn’t be.  
It must be a bad tooth. I hear the foreign doctors  
can wrest the weed from my mouth.

I begin the journey towards our clinic-church,  
but grow quickly air-starved  
& must stop to rediscover the wind within my lungs.  
This is time- crops, birds, farmers, & foreign doctors all age-

& this has been my year of aging.  
Air washes in & out my chest like well-worn burlap  
leaking grain- so it goes with old things like me.  
The foreign doctors beg to differ.

I try to show the rotten tooth, but they point at my heaving chest,  
skin sagging from thinning bones,  
& wonder at ways to turn back time. With a stethoscope  
they listen to the drum of my heart,  
then listen again,  
bright eyes narrowed in concentration.  
They speak in hushed tones,  
nodding, considering, & finally tell me

my heart is a home. It has four rooms. Blood moves  
through these rooms & the doorways of my heart,  
until it exits to spread like water  
across the fields & hills of my body.

But my home has grown old, its hinges rusted,  
& blood struggles to open its doorways.  
I need a replacement, fresh hinges no longer stiffened by age,  
or the land of my body may fall into its final rest.

The foreign doctors call this an aortic valve.  
It will take this year’s harvest & many more to buy.  
They ask if I have family. “A son,” I tell them,  
but I wonder about his wife & daughter;
the homes within their chests
filled with vibrant blood, newly oiled hinges,
& dreams of a world where they no longer work
our family fields but cultivate the furrows of the mind.

The foreign doctors may know much of medicine,
but understand little of farming, the churn of seasons,
& the dreams which whisper
through the rooms of my granddaughter’s heart.