

First Reading

“Hauling Out Stones” by Nancy Shaffer

Once, he said an odd thing:
Forgiving begins with someone sitting near.

Later he said,
It isn't for the one who did the hurting.
It's the other one who needs it.

One day, without warning,
He wept. I sat close.

He told an old hurt
in half-sentences and single words
like stones he was coming upon, new;
like tree limbs, broken,
which he needed both arms for hauling aside.

A half-dozen times that summer we sat,
He weeping, hauling out stones,
gathering limbs; I near.

The stones got smaller,
his sentences longer.

He said, *It's the crying part*
I couldn't do by myself.

And later he said, *I feel cleaned out.*
A wan smile.

Still later, he said, *I think I've done it.*
Made a kind of peace, he meant.