

**Gathering Stones**  
**by Bieke Stengos**

Father instructs us to gather flat stones  
that have washed up on the beach.  
He wants them for the path  
he's putting in the garden, back home.  
My brother and I marvel  
that home is a place  
where things happen, even with us gone.

My aunt says, he'll never use the stones,  
and she refuses to bend down  
to pick up even one.  
We coax her because we can't abide  
to see her contradict our father.

When she slips on algae,  
we laugh with the adults  
and watch her walk away,  
her bare feet slapping wet sand,  
her bum, a wiggle of stains.