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WHEN GIVING IS ALL WE HAVE

One river gives
Its journey to the next.

We give because someone gave to us.
We give because nobody gave to us.
We give because giving has changed us.
We give because giving could have changed us.
We have been better for it.
We have been wounded by it—

Giving has many faces: It is loud and quiet,
Big, though small, diamond in wood-nails.

Its story is old, the plot worn and the pages too,
But we read this book, anyway, over and again:

Giving is, first and every time, hand to hand,
Mine to yours, yours to mine.

You gave me blue and I gave you yellow.
Together we are simple green. You gave me

What you did not have, and I gave you
What I had to give—together, we made

Something greater from the difference.

Alberto Rios, born in 1952 in Nogales, Ariz., grew up along the Mexican border.
His father was from Mexico and his mother from England, which helped contribute
in his transcultural voice. Rios is a Regents’ Professor at Arizona State University,
where he has taught since 1982. In August 2013, Rios was named Arizona’s first
state poet laureate, a position he held until 2015.
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