

Breathing Under Water

I built my house by the sea.
Not on the sands, mind you;
not on the shifting sand.
And I built is of rock.
A strong house
by a strong sea.
And we got well acquainted, the sea and I.
Good neighbors.
Not that we spoke much.
We met in silences.
Respectful, keeping our distance,
but looking our thoughts across the fence of sand.
Always, the fence of sand our barrier,
always, the sand between.

And then one day,
-and I still don't know how it happened-
the sea came.
Without warning.

Without welcome, even
Not sudden and swift, but a shifting across the sand like wine,
less like the flow of water than the flow of blood.
Slow, but coming.
Slow, but flowing like an open wound.
And I thought of flight and I thought of drowning and I thought of death.
And while I thought the sea crept higher, till it reached my door.
And I knew, then, there was neither flight, nor death, nor drowning.
That when the sea comes calling, you stop being neighbors,
Well acquainted, friendly-at-a-distance neighbors,
And you give your house for a coral castle,
And you learn to breathe underwater.

- Sr. Carol Bieleck, RSCJ
From an unpublished work