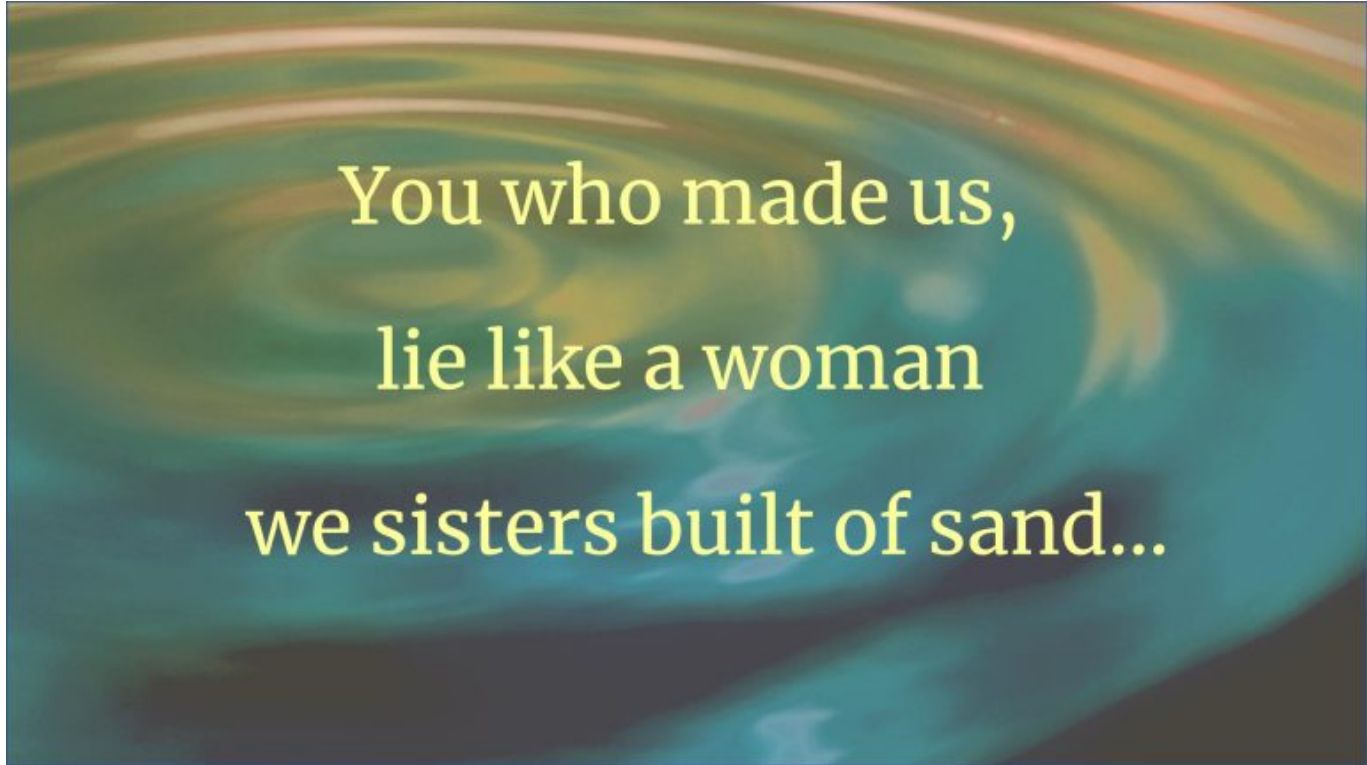


# We Are Here

Category: Poems

written by Deb O'Rourke | November 8, 2024



You who made us,  
lie like a woman  
we sisters built of sand...

We are here.  
At the foot of your bed,  
I warm your limp feet in my hands.

A daughter cleans your mouth, a thirsty anemone.  
Your only action is its eager suckle  
of the sponge. My sister's  
offering is careful, sparse—  
your retiring body can take little but air.

When that's a challenge, my other sister  
suctions your lungs, with awesome expertise.  
She holds her breath.  
It's an old nurses' trick, she says: "When  
we need air, we know the patient needs a break, too."

You receive her also, without struggle.  
As quiet as the land,  
you accept our final invasions—we  
three who fed from you, climbed on you, kicked you  
in the heart.

We are here.  
You who made us, lie like a woman  
we sisters built of sand. You are a part-time breather  
now as, for days, you try out that stillness

that will soon overtake you.

I count thirty seconds of

silence

Then it starts again:

small waves of breath from far  
away, lapping, lapping, building up to a breaker,  
fading away  
toward that far shore.

Again, silence.

Soon, the vessel of your breath  
will sink below that horizon, never to return.  
But we are all here, tonight.  
Getting old now too, your daughters stay,  
take turns, one on each side holding a hand,  
heads resting on your bed.  
The third sleeps on a nearby couch.

Then, as the window flickers  
from indigo night to rosy autumn day, we rise.  
"Another beautiful day, Mom," we  
announce, to your silence.

Oceanic night subsiding,  
the season you love crisps auburn and gold  
on the other side of the glass.

Still we are here, still together.  
One's head rolls sleepily on your shoulder.  
Carrying three coffees, I watch the  
other, wet-eyed, gaze at you.

We listen  
to your inhalations, your exhalations.  
While you breathe, we  
are all here.

Together.