

phenomena
By Brenna Koester

phenomena

forward: infinity scares me the most

someday
i want to write
words
that slam against your heart
 again
 and
 again
like wave against stone
filling fissures in your heart with saltwater
that dampens your cheeks
and
stains
this
page.

someday
i want these sentences to be lightning
that starts a bonfire with the tinder of your thoughts
i want it to catch fire within your bones
and burn
from the inside out.

someday
i want these words to be a storm
an earthquake
a volcano.
i want them to be a galaxy.
i want them to be a universe.
i want them to be
 [[infinite]]

PART I
(LOW TIDE, THE BEGINNING)

girls are made of

they told me i couldn't
because i was sugar and spice
all that was broken; all that was nice.
how could i
summon a tsunami
while i was drowning?

butterflies

i pinned
all the beautiful
words
to my paper
so i could keep them forever
inside my frame
inside my mind
even though i knew they wanted to
fly.

apollo 11

during the day
i am a meteor
too bright
too reckless
heedless of the damage i cause

but with nightfall
i become the moon
nothing more than a sliver of light in black oblivion
waiting for a wind that will never come
to erase the footprints of the memories
that still linger.

tectonic

the only explanation for the salty tears that come
unbidden
is that i have an ocean inside me
and somewhere
the earth has shifted
causing a tsunami to come forth.

[[i despise the desert

yet
that is all i want to be
during moments like this]]

self portrait

i erased every line
and left ghosts behind.
it was easy to do
because my lines were so light.

PART II
(EARTHQUAKE, UPRISING)

athena

you were afraid
of what i could become
when i stopped being everything nice
and became salt, sugar, spice
flames, hurricanes
clouds and rain
everything real
& everything powerful.
you were afraid
of who i would be when i wasn't
the image inside your mind,
afraid of who i would be when i became who i was.

airplanes

i wrote my story
in blue ink
on my skin
and let it wash away in the rain of september.
i wrote poetry on paper cranes
clumsily folded
bent at the seams.
my words had wings and the audacity to fly
so i set them free —

moon cycle

i accepted my scarred surface

my waning, my waxing
my craters and my mountains.

i wore my memories on my skin
and painted myself in color
so when the flag was planted
it was mine.

magnitude

i didn't know
how powerful my ocean was
until the earthquake came
intent on turning my world upside down
but it had no idea it would trigger a tsunami.

i never wanted to be a desert after all
because while an oasis is beautiful
it does not have the strength of a million tears and hurricanes
like my sea does.

kingdom come

watch us
come
with jars of paint and our brushes.
watch us cover the walls in the
dreams
you tore from our sketch pads and threw to the wind.
watch the color run down our wrists
to stain the floor.

watch us
paint over the names of everyone
who stole our paper, our crayons
our butterfly wings and crowns.
it was never make believe
because can't you see?
yes, we've grown
and we're no longer princesses
we're queens.

PART III
(TSUNAMI, CONCLUDING)

xx chromosomes

i am a girl
and with every
smile
tear
blink
breath
i have something to prove.
i am here to paint myself as a warrior
and dip my fingers in the legacy of the women before me.
i run my fingers down my cheeks
and let the ink drip.
thick
red
lines
i wear like scars —
the name of every woman who fought for me
is carved into my skin.

i am a girl
and i was raised to fight my way into the world
that whispered of me behind my back
and yet
never said my name.

i am a girl
and i'm ready to bring down the sky
to drain a sea
to see the world
and have it see me.

loose leaf

my dreams
were written with a dull pencil
on wide-ruled paper
that i gave to the wind.
my words
bled into oceans
and painted sunsets
shook the earth
painted the sky with stars.

they folded me into a paper girl
and anchored me to an ever-changing world
gave me a place to stand
a place to go
and at long last
a home.

dawn

i missed the sun
so i struck a match on liquid moonlight
and watched it become my everything.
//my sun has returned to the sky//

aftershock

the wishes i threw into fountains —
corroded and rusted and no longer shining —
and the saltwater i thought i would drown in,
my mistakes and smudged words
my hesitation and my silence —
like a thousand poems, crossed over, blacked out —
they made me stronger
not weaker.
for every night
i cursed my ocean
there is now a dawn
because i remained the sea.

canvas

in the end
i took my scars and skies
and my tidal waves and candles
my paint and brushes
my paper cranes and blue ink
my suns and moons
my oceans and tsunamis
my galaxies and my universes
my [[infinity]]

and i made
art.

The End
calm after the storm