

IF I AM HER

by SHADI HOLLENSTEINER

I trace the skin of my body
Like a fault line.

Waiting for a change

Waiting to break

Mirrors turn sharp with lies
And I believe
I shrink
Squeeze
Stand sideways
Wondering if I've taken up too much space

Just by existing.

And still -
I look like her.
Not the marble version

The real one:
Hips born of oceans,
A belly the tide could rest in,
A Mouth Made of Myth.

I know this
I know it
But knowing doesn't reach
It sits on the surface
Like petals on the water
Never quite sinking in.

I stand in the shower
With blood on my lips
Trying to feel holy.

But I only feel
Like a body.
Heavy, aching.

If I am her -
Why do I Flinch
Still
My own reflection.
Why does beauty feel
Like something that is granted
To other people

I want to believe in the goddess
Beneath
My skin

But most days,
I just try.
To get done.
Without crying.