

# True Form

By Marirose Bernal

Even the flowers think they know me,  
the river curving around autumn light,  
the humming mushrooms on the path out back.

I emerge into my true form only when it grows dark.  
Only when the world is too black to see through  
and I know the shape of me will blend in:  
liquid, shifting, a body made entirely of blood  
(and entirely the color of oil).

When there is no moon, I transcend,  
altering and remolding my mass.  
Like a snake, I have a certain sheen,  
a certain song, a certain scream.

I have ten beautiful black scales instead of  
fingernails. I have a forked tongue  
tucked behind my teeth, sharpened  
on sunshine. I have entire eyes  
as black as ink.

I'm shapeless. My frame  
has no formula, my body  
knows no bounds. I slither  
between one world and the next.

Animals don't look at me while I ebb and flow.  
Only the cats, the serpents, and the deer with their eyes like marbles  
will watch my moving shadow. This is the only time  
I ever enter the ocean, knowing I cannot drown.  
The water pulls away its tide,  
stays separate,  
like Moses I spill easily across the sea floor.

I seep into the dark of the trees.  
I lie pooled on the summer grass.  
I breathe in the only way that blood can:

long and slow, deep, gasping, aching,  
a dream drenched in nighttime.

Like a fountain that refills itself, everything  
that drips off my eyelashes  
is gathered back into my form.  
Only when dawn arises do I feel the threat  
of melting and light-headed murder.

I sink back into the earth,  
become a girl again,  
or at least – one kind.