

Spring 1991

## The Last Empty Seat on the Bus

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### Recommended Citation

Matovich, Judy J. (1991) "The Last Empty Seat on the Bus," *CutBank*: Vol. 1 : Iss. 35 , Article 27.

Available at: <https://scholarworks.umt.edu/cutbank/vol1/iss35/27>

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## The last empty seat on the bus

She appears from the dark blessing  
aisle seats with her fingertips  
all the way back to me, and oh,  
the way she holds her shoulders,  
every inch inside her pool of light  
beside me, never touching,  
and the bus pulls out and every hair  
lies still in the yellow light  
and she is one of every woman  
sent to me in visions.

My breathing blurs the pane  
where our faces overlap.  
I trace her lines in mist.  
When the time is right I move  
the coat and share with her  
the other image God has sent  
and I have drawn, this great  
black and blue penis inked  
on the red crush seat ahead.  
It's life, I tell her, the seed,  
the mystery, and the end of life  
in one, and she cannot speak  
or meet my eyes. I have one too,  
my own apprenticeship to God  
and she does not laugh. The people  
sleep around us like illustrations  
or warnings on a label. She reads them  
and I tell her how sometimes  
the only thing left is a bus  
through Wallace, Idaho at midnight,  
how the clever driver hides the signs  
so no one gets back, and I show her  
the secret maps that have healed  
on the private side of my wrists  
on days I don't remember. She listens

so quietly dark shadows begin  
to sit up and watch and somehow  
after Coeur d'Alene she's gone  
and her seat falling open beside me  
fills up like a fresh tunnel,  
drinking in space from solid air.

Spokane is all the bright lines I see  
in every city run together and the bus  
that drones and drifts through lights. I weep  
and see her everywhere, women glowing  
in yellow beams, in blue coats passing  
in taxis, women looking straight ahead.

*Judy J. Matovich*