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The Last Empty Seat on the Bus

Judy J. Matovich
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.

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