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On the Bus

by Carolyn Blount Brodersen

On the bus,
A humble woman
 with wonderful hair,
 Cotton candy
 Spider-silky
 Spun golden
 Straight strands
 Alive with light
Her only mark of beauty.
Each day
She wears the same
 blue polyester
 short-sleeved shirt
 faded dirty jeans,
And lofts a covered coffee cup.
Once, I tapped her arm and said
 your haircut looks great, it suits you.
She said thank you too fast,
 then resumed looking down.

On the bus,
Mr. Lou-the-driver
 greeted Felicia's grinning face,
 (more smirk than smile).
Her palsied hands clench
 and unclench the air.
He backs her into her spot
 left side, front,
And straps her safely in.
She hugs his neck.
Sometimes she squeezes him
 without letting go.
Gently, Lou unfurls her arms,
Then carries us all away
 on his regular route.
Her wheelchair lines up with Juan's
 who lurches in a silent dance

across the aisle.
His greasy red bandana
 crowns long stringy locks.
They flirt with each other
 in loud-slurred syllables.

The bus crowds as it rumbles along,
 gathering momentum and passengers
 looping along the coastal freeway
Each sunny-cool morning.

On the bus,
The afternoon crowd is freer, dustier.
Lucky riders catch the express.
We filter fumes
 for forty minutes.
I sit near my bus-buddy
 whose name I haven't asked.
She mostly wears purple—
It echoes her long black hair.
We brag about bargains and kids
 and the annoyances of life
 till we get to our stop.
Smelling like bus we roll home.

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