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Night Rider

Susan Sinclair

The night had fizzled out
 Like a cigarette in a puddle.
 My face was a badly fitted kitchen
 Damp and dripping,
 Piping trouble.
 It had been a bad night,
 And now I was slipping on the wet concrete pavements
 Like Gene Kelly with Parkinsons.

I was lost, and confused
 One fare short of a taxi
 Two wheels short of a bike
 My legs disobeyed everything I said
 And I thought of being a dyke for the night
 When a lovely looking lesbian stopped her car
 And offered me a ride.

That's when I saw you
 Big bright lights blinking to see me
 As you turned the corner
 Joy and relief surged through me like an orgasm.
 It was you!
 My Night Bus Home

I remember last week when I leaned my surrendered head against
 you,
 I nuzzled into the curve of your window,
 And when I looked through you
 I saw myself in your reflection:
 Mascara slipping shadows down to my lips,
 One pair of scissors short of a haircut,
 One conversation short of coherence.
 But you, Bus, made me bleary, blurry, beautiful.

On our first date
You gave me the gift of kebab.
It was half-eaten and still warm.

The second time we met
You placed a half-smoked cigarette stub below my feet.
When I saw that wrinkled butt waiting just for me,
I knew you were my very own Winfield kingsize special.

And then, although we agreed to take it slow,
On the third date we stopped
For twenty minutes at the bus depot
Just me and you
We shared a cigarette in the back seat,
And you put your lights out,
And I spat out my chewing gum,
And we sank into the engine hum,
And it was then,
My Night Bus Home,
I knew you were the only one.

But Shakespeare was right when he said
Parting is such sweet sorrow,
How my eyes ache when they're intruded by the cruel sun
And my heart breaks when our time is taken up by the dawn
Women in their manky tabards
Using you at six a.m. to get to
Work.
Or the
Workies sweating up your seats with their lewd and lunging
Bum-cracks.
And then those kids with sticky sweets fingering your upholstery
I know you think of me,
As you heave and splutter under the weight
Of briefcases and school-girl chatter

Your exhaust fumes all day,
Until, my Night Bus Home,
The day gives way to night
And me, and me alone.