

Monday, 7:08 am
Thank goodness she isn't late today
Seven minutes late and their parents would call
After all
She's just the school bus driver, anyway
They call her fat and short and ugly
She's all of these things, isn't she
But she still doesn't like it when they throw their hats
Or another kid's backpack
So she'll scold them with her voice of static
And they'll tune her out like classical music
Their heavy metal rock ringing in her ears
Old ears, but that doesn't matter
Her heart is old, her mind is old, this is getting old
And every day she wakes up with less will in her bones
And every day she wakes up in an empty home
With no mother to shake her out of bed
And no pancakes cooking by the toasted bread
Because this is her life, and this is her job
She drives every morning on a road as black as her tires
And black as the sky and her dreams
And the future she sees when she wakes and sleeps
Except for the weekends, then she can forget
But it's Monday again and they're screaming again
And she's driving again and they're rolling down the windows too far
Someone's hit the emergency alarm
She tells them to stop, stop, stop
She's a caretaker of fifty and that's too much
But they stand up and peel the skin off the seats
That she cleans the undersides of every week
And she's counted two hundred, seventy-three pieces of gum
Not to mention the wrappers and the crumbs
She can't take it anymore, she takes a wrong turn
And scrapes up the grass on the side of the curb
And they laugh
They laugh at her
Beating her to the floor with well-worn words
It was an accident but there's nothing she can do
After all, she was insecure from grade two
And being adult is definitely no better
Especially when you're fat and short and ugly
And old and wrinkled and tired
And a school bus driver.

At least
That's what I feel
When I'm sitting in the second row
Watching her steer the bus like a sailor
And her time-telling wrinkles stitched tight into her skin
And her blue eyes that flicker like uncertainty
Like waves caught between two boats...
A piece of trash goes flying out the window
Someone shouts her name as if it's funny
To use and abuse in their grade school jokes
And they forget
There's a human sitting in the driver's seat
Who's given up one hundred eighty days of her year
And who knows how many years of her miserable life
To drive these children to and from the place
Where they'll learn
So that when they become adults
Their job will not be
A school bus driver