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But I'm Not a Reading Teacher

Leah Panther

But I'm not a reading teacher.

Blonde haired future math teacher shrugged,

Dismissing non-algebraic letters.

The words a repeating rhythm

Week one, week two,

His refrain escalating,

So are you going to teach my math for me?

As if math was his alone.

I graduated, moved six hours from his diatribe,

And found a chorus with matching melody

But I'm not a reading teacher.

I teach kids to sing, not read.

Kids don't need to read in this class to succeed.

Sidewise glances at the English and reading teachers,

Wondering why they were not doing their jobs.

Why "those kids" were still reading at a third grade level
in seventh grade.

And why, for that matter, did they have to be a part of the solution,
when they weren't part of the problem?

The crescendo builds, it deafens, it fills the

Rooms the

Schools the

Politicians' inboxes.

I take the notes and recompose the bridge

I don't know how to teach reading, you mean?

And I'm scared I'll teach it wrong if I try

Just say it! The children have already taught you how.

The Taxi Driver's Daughter

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She's not a reader
Says an empty reading log
With one red zero.

Leaving the classroom,
The backseat becomes a desk
In a different school

Traversing touchscreens
She reads in takeout menus
Smelling every word

Stop signs and stop lights
She reads in double arches
Plastered on buses

The cars two stepping
She reads in dollars and tips
Their body language

She records it all
With painstaking clarity
Traced on window panes



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