

DELUXE CAB

by

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DELUXE CAB

Characters

SWEETS, 30s, foreign-born male, a cab driver.

WOMAN, an urban professional, younger, his fare.

Time

Present.

Setting

A city street. A cab.

DELUXE CAB

A wet city street at night. WOMAN, well-dressed, carrying an oversized purse and holding a briefcase over her head against the rain, desperately runs up to a parked taxi. The driver, SWEETS, is whatever nationality, ethnicity, or race in the actor's wheelhouse.

WOMAN

(Breathlessly.)

You available?

SWEETS sets a newspaper aside.

SWEETS

You betcha, miss, hop in. Where to?

WOMAN climbs in, dragging her belongings.

WOMAN

Twenty-sixth and Morrison.

SWEETS

Avenue or street, miss?

WOMAN

Avenue, street, does it make a difference?

SWEETS

'Bout fifty blocks.

WOMAN

Avenue. No. Street. No...Shit!

WOMAN frantically digs in her purse, muttering. SWEETS turns on the dome light.

SWEETS

Messy out there, huh?

No response, just muttering and digging, with all sorts of crap piling up on the WOMAN's lap, including a small gift-wrapped package.

SWEETS (CONT'D)

One of those nor-easters. They say it last for days.

No response. The muttering begins to coalesce into recognizable profanity.

SWEETS (CONT'D)
Someone you can call, miss?

WOMAN
Just a fucking minute, will you?

SWEETS bends to the radio, tunes it to a suitable station. WOMAN finds a pink memo and holds it up to the light.

WOMAN (CONT'D)
(*Aside.*)
Jesus-fucking Christ.
(*Reads.*)
Street.

SWEETS
Got it.

SWEETS starts the meter. Checks traffic, pulls out. WOMAN throws everything back in her purse, except the memo, which she clutches in her hand.

WOMAN
(*Aside.*)
Goddamn father-fucking bullshit...Shit, shit, shit!

SWEETS monitors her progress, and when she seems to have retrieved everything, turns off the dome light.

SWEETS
Bad storm. Not in it long, I hope.

WOMAN
(*A deep, ragged breath.*)
Long enough.

SWEETS
I'm glad I there. Night like this, hard to find cab.

WOMAN
Yes. Thank you.

SWEETS
You relax. I know shortcut.

WOMAN
Don't you dare. I know how that works. Your shortcut is going to cost me a shitload extra.

SWEETS

No, no, relax. Trust me. I know city.

WOMAN

And I know your number, you pull any of that shortcut shit.

SWEETS

No, no, you in hurry. I get you there quick.

WOMAN

Goddamn right, I'm in a hurry.

SWEETS

Special day? Birthday, maybe?

WOMAN

Huh?

SWEETS

You carry gift.

WOMAN

What?

SWEETS

In your bag, a pretty present--

WOMAN

--How do you know?!

SWEETS

You took it out, looking for address--

WOMAN

--What business is it of yours?

SWEETS

I'm sorry. Just making talk.

WOMAN

Well, you're giving me the creeps. Knock it off.

SWEETS

Sorry. No offense.

WOMAN

(Beat.)

How much further?

SWEETS

Five minutes. You see.

WOMAN

I better.

They ride for an uneasy few seconds, WOMAN steaming, SWEETS trying to ignore her.

WOMAN (CONT'D)

Can't you go any faster?

SWEETS

Not without danger to passenger.

WOMAN harrumphs. SWEETS eyes her in the mirror.

SWEETS (CONT'D)

Passenger safety is utmost concern of Deluxe Cab.

WOMAN

(Softening.)

All right. I get it.

SWEETS

(Encouraged.)

For passenger relaxation, maybe I put a bar back there. What you think?

WOMAN sways with a quick lane change.

WOMAN

(Getting in the spirit.)

I think the way you drive, that'd be a good idea.

SWEETS

For special days, eh? Drinks to celebrate.

WOMAN

(Something still on her mind.)

That too.

SWEETS

I got special day coming up. Birthday.

WOMAN

(Dutifully.)

Happy birthday.

SWEETS

Not me--my little girl. One year.

WOMAN

(Tearing up.)

Oh...That's nice.

SWEETS

Yeah, she's my little doll.

WOMAN suddenly bursts into tears. SWEETS, alarmed, watches her with divided attention. He hands her a box of tissues over his shoulder. WOMAN finally notices, takes box, puts a tissue to use.

WOMAN

Thank you.

SWEETS

Deluxe Cab, at your service.

WOMAN

I...I'm sorry I've made such a scene. Crying--it's embarrassing. I shouldn't have been so rude.

More tissues.

SWEETS

No, no. You sad. You must cry. It's good.

WOMAN

Good? I don't know what's good for me any more.

WOMAN stares out the window for several seconds, then...

WOMAN (CONT'D)

The gift. It's for a man.

(Beat.)

I'm asking his forgiveness.

SWEETS

You will get it. I am sure of that.

WOMAN

I don't deserve it.

SWEETS

That's what's good about forgiveness--it rewards giver and receiver both. This man will feel your goodness. He will be generous. You'll see.

WOMAN snuffles.

WOMAN

Thank you. You're nice.

SWEETS

That's why we call it Deluxe Cab.

WOMAN smiles.

WOMAN

This is the first cab I've been in ever had tissues.

SWEETS

In my homeland they say: "An ox always dreams of oxtail soup."

WOMAN

(Beat, then laughs with delight.)

What does that even mean?

SWEETS

(Laughing along.)

I don't know. I was hoping you could say.

WOMAN

I've never seen an ox, except in pictures.

SWEETS

You're lucky. Very smelly. Soup is good though.

WOMAN

I've heard of it. I'll have to try some.

SWEETS

Go to Chinatown. A specialty there.

WOMAN

Thank you.

(Beat.)

You've been very kind.

SWEETS

And speedy. Here we are. Courtesy Deluxe Cab.

SWEETS parks the cab with a grand gesture. WOMAN looks about.

WOMAN

What?...Wait--this isn't right.

SWEETS

Sure. Twenty-sixth Street and Morrison.

WOMAN, agitated, consults the memo.

WOMAN

Morrison's supposed to be a street.

SWEETS

Of course. Only one in city.

WOMAN

(Wildly.)

But there's no Garibaldi's here! Where's Garibaldi's restaurant?!

SWEETS

It's at Twenty-sixth Avenue and Morrison. You told me "street" when I asked.

WOMAN scans the memo again, mad with growing fear.

WOMAN

No, I thought we were talking about Morrison...Oh, God! You should've known what I meant! You should've made sure.

SWEETS

Common mistake. Simple misunderstanding. I fix.

WOMAN

It's all your fault! Oh, my God. You moron. You fucking incompetent asshole. Do you realize what you've done? I missed him. He's gone by now. You ruined everything.

SWEETS

I take you to Twenty-sixth Avenue. Meter off. You pay for only this far.

WOMAN

Go to hell! Here, this is all you're going to get!

WOMAN throws cash at SWEETS. She grabs her things and wrestles them out of the cab.

WOMAN (CONT'D)

Fuck you, you fucking foreign piece of shit!

WOMAN furiously slams the door and flees the stage, desperately looking for another cab. SWEETS collects the loose bills. He looks in his mirror, opens his door, waves down an unseen taxi SL. SWEETS crosses to the wings and leans in to talk to the driver O.S.

SWEETS

I know you off duty, but it's emergency. See lady over there? She go to Twenty-sixth Avenue and Morrison--you take her?...Here. For your trouble...

SWEETS pulls a \$20 bill from the cash in his hand, offers it to the unseen driver, who apparently takes it.

SWEETS (CONT'D)

Great. Thank you.

SWEETS stands up, watches the other cab go. Gets back in his own taxi. Sighing, SWEETS logs WOMAN's ride. Then he picks up his cell and speed dials. After ten seconds...

SWEETS (CONT'D)

(Gently.)

It's me.

(Beat.)

Yeah.

(Beat.)

Bit longer. I need one more good fare.

(Beat.)

Yeah. I can do that. What you need?

(Beat.)

Pampers, yeah, the little ones, 'course. Anything else?

(Beat, chuckles.)

Oh, yeah, Big One. You got it. No extra charge.

(Beat.)

Bye, love. Hey, wait...Something happened, remind me that you the sun and moon both, and all the stars.

SWEETS listens for a moment more, then kisses the mouthpiece gently and hangs up. He turns up the radio and sings briefly along with it. The rear door opens and he turns, listens, then...

SWEETS (CONT'D)

You betcha, sir, hop in. Where to?

Fade to black.

THE END