

Monumental Favour



written by

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EXT. STREET - DAY

At dawn, the sun casts its first light over a sprawling metropolis.

A white Acorn taxi idles silently outside a towering apartment block.

INT. TAXI - DAY

SAMIR (30s), a man of Middle Eastern descent, sits in the driver's seat, his expression clouded with concern. He glances at the dashboard clock: 6:45 a.m.

The sounds of a trunk opening, items being loaded, and then slamming shut in rapid succession. Samir swivels his head toward the noise.

The back passenger door swings open, and JIM (30s), a well-groomed man in a sharp suit, slides into the back seat.

JIM

Sorry, sorry, sorry, we gotta go.
The flights eight am. Step on it,
bud.

Samir quickly gets his car in motion.

SAMIR

I'm on it. Thirty minutes max.
You're okay.

JIM

When-stroke if I board that flight,
I'll be okay.

Jim retrieves his printed flight itinerary from his trouser pocket and waves it behind Samir's seat.

JIM (CONT'D)

Couldn't find the one I printed
yesterday. Print it this morning
and I get paper load jam...paper
load jam! Took me twenty minutes to
print the bastard. Dude, I was
cursing. Profanity city. Sorry,
bud. Don't suppose, you could hit
that accelerator a bit more?

SAMIR

I'm sorry, it's very strict.

JIM
I hear ya. Goddamn printer.

EXT. URBAN HIGHWAY - DAY

The taxi cruises through light traffic.

INT. TAXI - LATER

The taxi is stationary. Jim and Samir stare ahead, their faces etched with worry — Jim's expression far graver.

The taxi idles in a queue, the traffic light ahead glowing red in the near distance.

JIM
I don't believe this. Why's it this busy, this early?

Samir glances at his dashboard clock.

SAMIR
Seven now. Commuters always make seven busy in Boston.

JIM
I know it's seven now. Believe me, I know... It's not your fault, it's my fault. I know that, too. But I'm on the verge of spontaneously combusting, here.

In the distance, the traffic light shifts from amber to green.

JIM (CONT'D)
Yes!

Samir nudges the taxi forward, but the progress is agonisingly slow.

JIM (CONT'D)
Ah, nuts.

Before long, the distant traffic light flickers from amber back to red as the taxi slows to a stop.

JIM (CONT'D)
Wow.

SAMIR

Don't worry, sir, we'll get there... where are you flying to today?

JIM

If, by some miracle, I board the plane, I'm heading to L.A.

SAMIR

Los Angeles, that sounds exciting. May I inquire the reason for your trip, sir?

JIM

I've got a very important meeting. A very important opportunity... and I'm sincerely regretting 'cheaping' out of getting a hotel room.

SAMIR

Is the meeting today?

JIM

Yes.

Samir edges the taxi forward, moving at a snail's pace.

SAMIR

Huh...I wonder if today is the day that the lady spoke of.

JIM

What??

SAMIR

The Tarot reader, sir.

JIM

It's Jim.

SAMIR

Well, you see Jim, Me and my wife, Kamil, visited her on the weekend. Kamil loves that kind of affair, I find it all a bit fake.

Jim's expression tightens, signaling he's not in the mood for the story – his focus fixed on the traffic ahead.

JIM

Yep.

SAMIR

But interestingly, this Tarot reader declared I would do somebody a monumental favour in the coming week.

Jim's eyes suddenly show interest.

JIM

Yes. Yes. It is definitely today. Get me to the airport in fifteen minutes and my god, you'll be doing me a monumental favour.

Jim's eyes dart sharply to the green traffic light ahead. Desperation mounting, he shakes the back of Samir's driver's seat urgently.

JIM (CONT'D)

We can make this one, go, go, go!

Under pressure, Samir forcefully shifts the gear stick into drive, accelerating into the open space ahead as he races toward the still-green light.

It goes to amber...

JIM (CONT'D)

Don't stop, monumental favour, we can do it!

It goes to red... undeterred, the taxi barrels over the line and takes a sharp right.

JIM (CONT'D)

Yes! Now were talking.

Suddenly, a red warning light blinks on the dashboard. Samir's eyes clock on to it.

SAMIR

Oh no.

Samir steers the car to the shoulder of the road and brings it to a stop.

JIM

What are you doing!

Samir gestures to the flashing light.

SAMIR

I'm so sorry, sir. I believe the gear stick has malfunctioned.

JIM

What! Whaddya mean?... will the car still drive?

SAMIR

I'm sorry, I can't. Company policy. It's very dangerous. I'm so sorry.

JIM

Ya kidding me. Monumental favour...
(checks the driver's id)
...monumental favour, Samir.
Please...please.

SAMIR

I can get you another driver.

JIM

We gotta fix it -- how long's the driver gonna take?

SAMIR

Maybe ten-twenty minutes.

Jim's face is thunderstruck.

JIM

No...no. This can't be happening. That's not gonna work, Samir.

Jim buries his head into his hands, on the verge of weeping, as Samir sits somber in the drivers seat.

JIM (CONT'D)

Ah god... you've killed me. I'm so stupid... so, so stupid.

FADE TO:

EXT. URBAN HIGHWAY - SHOULDER - DAY

Jim stands close to the taxi, speaking into his mobile phone. His case sits beside him.

INT. TAXI

Samir, still in the drivers seat, has his receiver to hand.

DISPATCH

Roadside assistance ETA, fifteen minutes.

SAMIR

Thank you.

Samir places the receiver down as the back passenger door opens. Jim slides into the seat, a look of contentment settling on his face.

JIM

They're happy to see me next week... found our situation amusing, actually.

SAMIR

I'm so pleased to hear that.

JIM

Me too... sorry about all this, I acted like a real asshole.

SAMIR

I'm sorry too -- you lost your money on the flights?

JIM

Probably -- do you have to shell out for the car repairs?

SAMIR

Company will take care of that.

Both Samir and Jim notice another white taxi pulling up behind them in the rearview mirror.

JIM

Here's my ride home.

Jim reaches into his trouser pocket, pulls out some cash, and hands it toward Samir.

JIM (CONT'D)

Here's your fare.

SAMIR

No, really, not necessary.

JIM

Take it. I've got an extra week now to prepare -- which I needed.

Jim grabs a couple more notes from outta his pocket.

JIM (CONT'D)

And here's another thirty, cos I was a dick.

SAMIR

No, I can't.

JIM

Look, you've done me a favour,
monumental, I dunno -- but a favour
nonetheless. Got a free day now,
can just go home and watch TV. Take
it.

Samir reluctantly nods and takes the cash from Jim's hand.

SAMIR

Thank you, Jim.

JIM

No problem. See ya around, Samir.

Jim exits the taxi, and Samir's eyes are drawn to the flight
itinerary left on the back seat. He picks it up, glances at
it, chuckling softly as it reminds him of today's events.

He then places the itinerary on the seat next to him and sits
in his driver's seat and waits.

We shift back down, closing in on the green flight itinerary:

American Airlines. Name of Passenger: DENTON/JIM MR

AA11. From: BOSTON. To: LOS ANGELES.

Date: 11SEP01

FADE OUT.