

A FARE RIDE

TEN MINUTE PLAY

By Matt Thompson

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SYNOPSIS: When a deft bank robber dives into the back seat of a tough-as-nails New York city female cab driver, he finds that he has taken on more than he can handle! This quirky comedy is sure to bring a smile to your face.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(1 MAN, 1 WOMAN)

THIEF (m) A bumbling con artist who tries to rob a bank. Asks out the taxi driver.
TAXI DRIVER (f) Tough-as-nails, New York City know-it-all cab driver.

*Winner of the 2006 Theatre Alliance Festival of San Diego's
Best New Short Play Award*

AT RISE:

Lights up. A taxi cab. Two chairs and a steering wheel sit center stage. A sassy female TAXI DRIVER hums a tune to herself and pulls the taxi over. A young man, a BANK ROBBER, not too bright, enters the cab. She begins to drive.

BANK ROBBER: *(Overly dramatic.)* Okay, go, go, go!

A beat.

TAXI DRIVER: *(A little excited.)* So, where are we going?

BANK ROBBER: *(Taking out a gun and pointing it at the TAXI DRIVER.)* Just drive, lady.

TAXI DRIVER: *(Very composed.)* Okay. *(THEY drive for a while. TAXI DRIVER hums her tune.)* Where are we going?

BANK ROBBER: The nearest bank.

TAXI DRIVER: Do you want a big bank or a medium-sized bank or a family-owned little bank?

BANK ROBBER: I don't know. Just take me to a bank on the west side.

TAXI DRIVER: Bank of the West, Oregon Financial, Americorp Home and Loan, Carson Savings? Carson! Have you ever been to the city of Carson? What a dump! I think it's short for Carcinogenic. You know, because they got all those oil refineries there, and it's really bad for the environment, and...

BANK ROBBER: Wait, wait, wait! What was the second one?

TAXI DRIVER: Oregon Financial?

BANK ROBBER: No, the third one, then!

TAXI DRIVER: Bank of the West?

BANK ROBBER: No, the long one.

TAXI DRIVER: Americorp Home and Loan?

BANK ROBBER: Yeah. That's the one! Take me to that one.

TAXI DRIVER: It's closed.

BANK ROBBER: How do you know?

TAXI DRIVER: It's Saturday.

BANK ROBBER: So?

TAXI DRIVER: So they're a Jewish bank. They're not open today.

Well, actually they close on Friday night when the sun goes down and they stay closed until Saturday night, but then again, no banks are even open at night, so they just stay closed all day Saturday, so...

BANK ROBBER: Okay! Okay! Well, which banks are open on Saturday?

TAXI DRIVER: What do I look like, the Yellow Pages?

BANK ROBBER: What time is it?

TAXI DRIVER: It's about 12:30. Most banks close at one. So you better hurry and make up your mind.

BANK ROBBER: Just shut up and drive!

TAXI DRIVER: Okay! So pushy. *(A beat.)* Did you just rob a bank?

BANK ROBBER: Why do you ask?

TAXI DRIVER: Because you jumped in the cab and yelled, "Go, Go, Go!" like I was already the get-away car and you were escaping.

BANK ROBBER: I was...rehearsing.

TAXI DRIVER: Rehearsing? What are you, an actor or something? You're not some "method" guy trying to get into a role, are you?

BANK ROBBER: No! I'm a bank robber!

TAXI DRIVER: That's too bad. I love actors.

BANK ROBBER: *(A little weary with her now.)* Look, just drive, okay?

TAXI DRIVER: Right. I'm sorry, I want to be efficient and all as your accomplice, but I forgot, which bank are we going to?

BANK ROBBER: Just take me to the closest one! And you're not an accomplice.

TAXI DRIVER: *(A little disappointed.)* I'm not?

BANK ROBBER: No, I work alone.

TAXI DRIVER: *(Under her breath.)* Then why don't you drive the get-away car?

BANK ROBBER: What, what?

TAXI DRIVER: *(Sweet and cheery.)* Nothing. Where are we going again?

BANK ROBBER: Uh...the west side.

TAXI DRIVER: I thought you wanted the bank downtown?

BANK ROBBER: You said they're not open on Saturday!

TAXI DRIVER: I didn't say that.

BANK ROBBER: Yes, you did. You said many of the banks are not open on Saturdays.

TAXI DRIVER: Some of them are.

BANK ROBBER: But that's what you said!

TAXI DRIVER: I don't remember saying that. But some banks are open and some are closed.

BANK ROBBER: Well, which ones?

TAXI DRIVER: Which ones what?

BANK ROBBER: Which ones are open today?

TAXI DRIVER: You mean which banks?

BANK ROBBER: (*Becoming frustrated.*) Yes, which banks.

TAXI DRIVER: I don't work in a bank. I drive a cab. You didn't do your research too well before you planned this whole thing out, did you?

BANK ROBBER: Just keep driving, or I'll shoot you!

TAXI DRIVER: You can't shoot me. We're going 80 miles per hour on the expressway. If you shot me, then you would die too, because the car would careen out of control and slam into the next car, and then...

BANK ROBBER: Okay, just shut up and pull over!

TAXI DRIVER: If I pull over, then you'll shoot me and drive away, so I'll just keep driving.

BANK ROBBER: But... I... You...

The BANK ROBBER is completely frustrated at this point as the TAXI DRIVER begins to hum a tune.

BANK ROBBER: What's that tune your humming? It sounds familiar. What is it? Is it from a movie?

TAXI DRIVER: Maybe.

BANK ROBBER: Is it from a TV show?

TAXI DRIVER: You're getting warm.

BANK ROBBER: Alright, forget it, what am I doing? No more games!

TAXI DRIVER: I just thought that we could play a little driving game to pass the time.

BANK ROBBER: We are not playing any driving games, because I am in charge here! I have the gun!

TAXI DRIVER: Okay. You've got the gun. But I've got the marzipan.

Beat.

BANK ROBBER: What?

BANK ROBBER: Nothing.

Beat.

TAXI DRIVER: Do you want some?

BANK ROBBER: Some what?

TAXI DRIVER: Some marzipan.

BANK ROBBER: *(Thinks for second.)* No. *(Thinks for another second.)* Yes. No! I mean... What is it?

TAXI DRIVER: What?

BANK ROBBER: Marzipan. This marzipan. What is it?

TAXI DRIVER: It's only the most delicious, most magical-tasting candy on Earth.

BANK ROBBER: How much do you have?

TAXI DRIVER: I've got pounds of it. My uncle's an ice cream man.

BANK ROBBER: Ice cream man?

TAXI DRIVER: Yeah, you know, he drives around various neighborhoods in a twenty-year-old van with pictures of all the different ice creams plastered about the vehicle. Big Sticks! Triple Cones! Circus Pops! The ice cream man! My uncle was the sweetest man on Earth. Get it? Sweetest man? *(Laughs obnoxiously.)* Sweetest man? *(SHE laughs.)*

BANK ROBBER: Uh-huh.

TAXI DRIVER: Anyhow, as the ice cream man, he also sold confections.

BANK ROBBER: Con-what?

TAXI DRIVER: Confections. You know, candy! He sold jelly beans and Swedish Fish and grape licorice and Pop Rocks. Remember Pop Rocks? The candy that explodes in your mouth. (*Does some effects of an exploding candy.*) My kid brother had a little friend that ate three bags of Pop Rock candy, all strawberry flavor, and drank two cans of Fanta soda pop, and he died.

BANK ROBBER: Get back to the marzipan.

TAXI DRIVER: Oh sure, my uncle had a whole bunch of the stuff, so he gave me like a crate full. Normally, I give it out to fares, but since you've got a little attitude thing going on, you can't have any.

BANK ROBBER: Is it worth anything?

TAXI DRIVER: Marzipan is worth its weight in gold.

Beat.

BANK ROBBER: I want the marzipan.

TAXI DRIVER: It's in the trunk.

BANK ROBBER: Stop the car.

TAXI DRIVER: No.

BANK ROBBER: Stop the car. I'm gettin' the marzipan.

TAXI DRIVER: No.

BANK ROBBER: Just *pull over!*

SHE ignores him and begins to hum another tune.

BANK ROBBER: Okay, stop.

TAXI DRIVER: Stop what?

BANK ROBBER: That humming!

TAXI DRIVER: Am I driving you crazy?

BANK ROBBER: Shut up.

TAXI DRIVER: Get it? Driving you crazy. I'm a cab driver, and I'm...driving.

*SHE starts to hum the theme from M*A*S*H.*

BANK ROBBER: Look, I told you to stop humming that song!

TAXI DRIVER: This is a different song.

BANK ROBBER: Well, stop humming it anyway!

TAXI DRIVER: You should get this one. It's easy.

BANK ROBBER: (*Really frustrated.*) Stop it right now, or I'll shoot you.

TAXI DRIVER: You can't shoot me while I'm humming, because I'm still driving. And if I'm still driving and you shoot me, then we will crash into a telephone pole and my car will flip five times like on *The A-Team*, but you wouldn't be injured because they always walked away from those crashes. Do you remember that show? It was great. B.A. Baracas. (*Does an impersonation.*) "I pity the fool who ate my sandwich! I'm gonna bust him up. Whooo! Sucker!" My favorite episode was when Hannibal opened an ostrich farm and...

BANK ROBBER: Okay! Okay! Just shut up! Please just be quiet! I have a gun. Did I remind you of that? This is a gun. A what? A gun! This is a supercharged five loaded barrel with double cut edging! So shut your pretty little mouth and just drive, will you? I need to think.

Beat. The TAXI DRIVER starts clicking her tongue. She then begins to whistle or hum another tune. The BANK ROBBER has had enough.

BANK ROBBER: STOP IT! (*Very serious.*) Now, take me to a bank or a convenience store or a bowling alley or something before I become really angry. Don't make me angry. You wouldn't like me when I'm angry.

Beat. The TAXI DRIVER busts out laughing. SHE is nearly uncontrollable at this point.

BANK ROBBER: What? What are you laughing at?

SHE keeps laughing.

BANK ROBBER: Stop laughing at me! What is so funny, lady?

TAXI DRIVER: You. *(Imitating him.)* "Don't make me angry. You wouldn't like me when I'm angry." That's what David Banner says before he turns into the Incredible Hulk.

BANK ROBBER: What?

TAXI DRIVER: You lifted that from that TV show, "The Incredible Hulk"!

BANK ROBBER: I don't know what you're talking about!

TAXI DRIVER: *(To amuse herself.)* Do it again! Do it again!

BANK ROBBER: Do what?

TAXI DRIVER: Say the line.

BANK ROBBER: No.

TAXI DRIVER: Come on, be a pal. Do the line. It's great. Please.

BANK ROBBER: *(Pouting like a child.)* No.

TAXI DRIVER: Come on, come on, do it again and... I'll take you wherever you want to go. Free of charge. No fare. Pleeeeease. Just once more, and I'll never bother you again. I promise.

BANK ROBBER: You'll stop humming?

TAXI DRIVER: Yes.

BANK ROBBER: And you'll take me to a bank?

TAXI DRIVER: Where ever you want to go.

BANK ROBBER: Okay. *(Does the impersonation again.)* "Don't make me angry. You wouldn't like me when I'm angry."

There is a pause before the TAXI DRIVER bursts out laughing again.

TAXI DRIVER: Oh, you're killing me! Not literally I hope, but man is that funny!

BANK ROBBER: You know, my parole office told me I should do stand-up. In fact, I... Hey, hey look out for that truck!

SFX of tires screeching as the actors lurch to one side.

TAXI DRIVER: That was close

BANK ROBBER: *(Nervous.)* Uh... yeah.

TAXI DRIVER: You know, you're really good, though, at that David Banner impersonation.

BANK ROBBER: Yeah?

TAXI DRIVER: Yeah.

BANK ROBBER: You know, I can do other imitations.

TAXI DRIVER: Really, like who?

BANK ROBBER: I can do... Normal Fell.

TAXI DRIVER: Who's Norman Fell?

BANK ROBBER: You know, Mr. Roper from "Three's Company."

TAXI DRIVER: I don't know him.

BANK ROBBER: Yeah, yeah, he used to make a really bad joke, then look straight into the camera with this big goofy smile. (*Imitating Norman Fell.*) "Helen, we just bought a cocker spaniel. We can put it in the dog run so it can be with your mother." (*Turns out to the imaginary "camera" with a Norman Fell smile.*) Pretty good, huh?

TAXI DRIVER: (*Not impressed.*) I guess. So, how many people?

BANK ROBBER: What?

TAXI DRIVER: How many people have you shot?

BANK ROBBER: I'm not gonna tell you that.

TAXI DRIVER: Why not?

BANK ROBBER: Because...I can't...keep track.

TAXI DRIVER: You don't know how many people you've gunned down?

BANK ROBBER: What are you, the Census Bureau? I told you, no! I don't remember! And unless you want to become a statistic yourself, you better keep driving.

TAXI DRIVER: I think it's kind of odd that a bank robber can't remember how many people he has shot down. I mean, wouldn't you use that as a scare tactic? "Keep movin', toots, unless you want to be number 67!" You need an edge, man. I think you need to re-address your whole bank robber image. Spice it up. Add a few statistics. Maybe a dark overcoat. I mean, look at you. What are you wearing? A Member's Only jacket? This isn't the Reagan Administration, buddy. Where's the bandana, the rings, the chains, the bedlam messed-out hair? I mean, really! You are probably the

most boring bank robber I have ever had as a ride. In fact, you know what? I don't think I want your fare. I'm pulling over.

BANK ROBBER: What?

TAXI DRIVER: Buddy, life is too short for a bad ride. I mean, what am I going to tell my friends down at the control station? "Hey, guess what? The most exciting fare I got today was from Richie Cunningham with a gun." I'm droppin' you off at this exit so you can get a boring driver. Because a boring bank robber doesn't go with an awesome getaway car.

BANK ROBBER: I thought you wanted to be the getaway car?

TAXI DRIVER: Not the way that you're dressed.

BANK ROBBER: Well, you're not a picnic either, lady. You could put on a pair of earrings and a little make-up yourself, you know.

TAXI DRIVER: Since I don't have air conditioning in this car, the make-up would run down my face! And give me a break, I'm driving with six inch heels on as it is! You know, that's the problem with men. You can never please them. It's never enough. Never! My ex-boyfriend used to complain about the same thing! "You wear too much eyeliner. Don't tease your hair out. That dress makes you look fat!"

BANK ROBBER: He said that?

TAXI DRIVER: *(Nearly in tears.)* Yes.

BANK ROBBER: Well, I think you're really pretty.

TAXI DRIVER: You do?

BANK ROBBER: Yeah. If I wasn't on a three-day pass from the correctional facility, I'd take you out.

TAXI DRIVER: Really?

BANK ROBBER: Sure, why not?

TAXI DRIVER: *(Excited.)* Then it's a date. I'm just gonna stop by my apartment real quick and...

BANK ROBBER: Look, maybe I should just...

TAXI DRIVER: Oh my goodness, I can wear my satin dress with the purple frills and *Flashdance* style leg warmers...

BANK ROBBER: Leg warmers? You know, actually, I've been thinking...

TAXI DRIVER: And then after we rob the bank, we can go to the Top of the Cove. Oh, I love that restaurant! We could have lobster every night for the rest of our lives!

BANK ROBBER: I hate lobster.

TAXI DRIVER: We'll have plenty of money from all of our bank robbing, so that won't matter. We'll be a modern-day Bonnie and Clyde. And then, oh... You can take me shopping at Felines and Macy's, and oh my goodness, and we can go to Istanbul and run with the bulls!

BANK ROBBER: Isn't that in Spain?

TAXI DRIVER: We can go there, too. Oh my gosh, we will fall in love and have thirteen children. I want a big family!

BANK ROBBER: Family?

TAXI DRIVER: What should we name our first child? What do you think of the name Marta Espinosa de Joni Rigatoni?

BANK ROBBER: I'm allergic to red sauce.

TAXI DRIVER: I can't wait for our life to begin!

BANK ROBBER: Shopping? Marriage? Children?

TAXI DRIVER: Won't it be wonderful!

The BANK ROBBER can't take it anymore as HE dives out of the cab and offstage.

BANK ROBBER: AHHHHH!

TAXI DRIVER: *(Smiling.)* Men. Works every time. *(To an invisible car. And tough as nails.)* Hey, buddy, outta the way!

SHE smiles as the lights fade to black.

THE END