

A must read.....

I arrived at the address and honked the horn. After a few minutes with no response, I honked again. Since this was my last ride of the day, I considered just driving away, but instead, I parked the car, walked up to the door, and knocked.

"Just a minute," answered a frail, elderly voice. I heard something being dragged across the floor.

After a long pause, the door opened. A tiny woman in her 90s stood before me, wearing a print dress and a pillbox hat with a veil pinned on it, like someone out of a 1940s movie.

Beside her was a small nylon suitcase. The apartment seemed like it hadn't been lived in for years. All the furniture was covered with sheets. There were no clocks on the walls, no knickknacks, or utensils on the counters. In the corner was a cardboard box filled with photos and glassware.

"Would you carry my bag to the car?" she asked.

I took the suitcase to the car, then returned to help the woman. She took my arm, and we walked slowly toward the curb. She kept thanking me for my kindness.

"It's nothing," I told her. "I just try to treat my passengers the way I would want my mother to be treated."

"Oh, you're such a good person" she said. When we got in the car, she gave me an address and then asked, "Could you drive through downtown?"

"It's not the shortest way," I replied quickly.

"Oh, I don't mind," she said. "I'm in no hurry. I'm on my way to a hospice."

I looked in the rear-view mirror. Her eyes were glistening. "I don't have any family left," she continued softly. "The doctor says I don't have very long."

I quietly reached over and shut off the meter.

"What route would you like me to take?" I asked.

For the next two hours, we drove through the city. She showed me the building where she had once worked as an elevator operator. We drove through the neighborhood where she and her husband had lived as newlyweds. She had me stop in front of a furniture warehouse that had once been a ballroom where she had gone dancing as a girl. Sometimes she'd ask me to slow down in front of a particular building or corner, and she would sit, staring into the darkness, saying nothing.

As the first hint of sun creased the horizon, she suddenly said, "I'm tired. Let's go now."

We drove in silence to the address she had given me. It was a low building, like a small convalescent home, with a driveway that passed under a portico.

Two orderlies came out to the cab as soon as we pulled up. They were solicitous and intent, watching her every move. They must have been expecting her. I opened the trunk and took the small suitcase to the door. The woman was already seated in a wheelchair.

"How much do I owe you?" she asked, reaching into her purse.

"Nothing," I said.

"You have to make a living," she answered.

"There are other passengers," I responded.

Almost without thinking, I bent and gave her a hug. She held onto me tightly.

"You gave an old woman a little moment of joy," she said. "Thank you."

I squeezed her hand and then walked into the dim morning light. Behind me, a door shut.

It was the sound of the closing of a life.

I didn't pick up any more passengers that shift. I drove aimlessly, lost in thought. For the rest of that day, I could hardly talk. What if that woman had gotten an angry driver or one who was impatient to end his shift? What if I had refused to take the run or had honked once, then driven away?

Upon reflection, I don't think I have done anything more important in my life. We're conditioned to think that our lives revolve around great moments. But great moments often catch us unaware, beautifully wrapped in what others may consider small ones.

PEOPLE MAY NOT REMEMBER EXACTLY WHAT YOU DID OR WHAT YOU SAID, BUT THEY WILL ALWAYS REMEMBER HOW YOU MADE THEM FEEL.

At the bottom of this great story was a request to forward it – I deleted that request because if you have read to this point, you won't need to be asked to pass it along. You just will.

Life may not be the party we hoped for, but while we are here, we might as well dance.

NOTA BENE: I too used to drive night shift of stretch limousine cruising along the streets of Manhattan, the Big Apple. I mostly gave ride to media and tinsel town celebrities and one such was Robert De Niro who I picked up from his residence at Tribeca area.

Similarly, my shift too that day ended at the wee hour of the morning when the first light just started to glisten on the eastern horizon.

For the sake of privacy compliance, I refrain from going into the details but that was some experience of a kind.

(Collected and shared with thanks to the original contributor. I was literally moved and it touched my heart)