



THE Cinderella SYNDROME

by Joe

Dear readers, have you ever wondered how Cinderella (or Cindy in short) would cope in today's era of having to take a cab to and from the Royal Ball?

"Cindy! Where's my dress?" hollered elder stepsister.

"You stupid girl, can't you do anything right? You're good-for-nothing!" said step-mum in her sarcastic tone.

"Mummy dearest! It's time to go... I can't wait to meet Prince Charming," drooled the younger stepsister.

After ten minutes of fumbling with dowdy dresses, ugly Step-mum with her even uglier daughters left for the Royal Ball at The Esplanade. Prince Charming was organising the prestigious event to choose his future queen and they could not afford to be late.

"Ohhh! How I wish I could meet the Prince?" cooed Cindy.

"Poof!" and a pretty and voluptuous lady appeared in front of Cindy suddenly.

"Yo Cindy! I'm Carrie and I'm gonna be your Fairy Makeover Consultant. I'll make sure Prince Charming will fall in love with you when I'm done making you over," she said.

Besides applying thick makeup, Carrie also styled Cindy's hairdo into bouffant masterpiece. Dressed in Gucci's latest ball gown, carrying a Louis Vuitton tote bag with her tiny feet shod in a pair of exquisite Manolo's glass slippers, Cindy was ready. And oh yes, did we mention her two-carat diamond tiara and pearl necklace and earrings?

"OK, I'm done. I can't give you a pumpkin carriage any more as the Fairies economy is in a recession and we need to cut costs. Here's some cash and you can take a cab to the Ball," said Carrie as a matter-of-fact. And then she was gone.

Feeling very confused indeed, Cindy came down from her Stevens Road bungalow and tried to hail a cab for the very first time in her whole life.

"Screeeeeeech." The taxi stopped suddenly before Cindy, nearly causing a chain collision behind him. As Cindy climbed into the cab (in a very lady-like manner), the cabbie started rattling.

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"Yes Miss, where you going?"

"The Esplanade, please," replied Cindy.

"Which route you want to take? The Central Expressway or go by Orchard Road?" asked the cabbie.

"Central Expressway please. Thank you." Cindy replied. Little did she know it's the longer route. "Screeeeeeech." The taxi screamed to a stop at the Esplanade's taxi stand.

"Ok Miss, total is \$12," the cabbie grinned.

"What! Why so much?" remarked Cindy, still recovering from the death-defying ride she just experienced a while ago.

"Meter fare \$8, peak-hour surcharge add \$1, CBD Area surcharge add \$1, ERP* add \$2," said the cabbie nonchalantly.

Grudgingly, Cindy paid the cabbie and hurried to see her Prince Charming.

As her fairy makeover consultant said, Prince Charming did fall head over heels in love with Cindy. They danced the whole night and he never took his eyes off her. Soon, it was 11.30pm and Cindy realised she had to leave for home. Otherwise her step-mum and stepsisters will know she's being dancing with the Prince. In her hurry, she left one of her glass slippers behind.

It's 11.45pm and Cindy's still waiting at the roadside for a cab. Most of those she spotted were either full or had their "ON CALL" signs lit up. Oh dear! What can she do but wait because in her hurry to leave, she also left her mobile phone in the Esplanade restroom. So careless!

The clock strikes twelve and she's back in her old and dirty clothes. Without the aid of any magic wand, 20 empty cabs appeared out of nowhere and sped towards Cindy.

The first cab stopped and the cabbie took a long hard look at Cindy before muttering, "Sorry, I'm changing shift!"

The second cab was no better as he's only willing to go to Woodlands Town.

Cindy got lucky with the third cab and she reached home in 10 minutes flat.

"What? \$10? I thought I asked you to take the shorter route?" said Cindy excitedly.

"Aiyoh Miss! Is this your first time taking a taxi? Meter fare is \$6.70 plus additional 50 per cent midnight surcharge is \$10!" the cabbie retorted.

"Holy Crap!" screamed Cindy as she handed the cabbie his fare.

Feeling very ripped off indeed, she decided to never take a cab for the rest of her life.

Not only had she lost her pretty glass slipper and mobile phone but also lost her temper at a cabbie. Wait till the Prince hears of this, she thought to herself.

And that my dear readers is what we call the Cinderella Syndrome - losing one's temper after riding a cab.

Well, it is true that once we start to decipher the pricing of taxis, it would be almost equivalent to us getting a degree in taxiology! Here are few facts that you would like to know about our three taxi operators: Citycab, TIBS and Comfort.

*ERP - Electronic Road Pricing.



NEED A DEGREE IN "TAXIOLOGY"?

Flagdown and meter rates: All 3 operators have the same flag down and meter fares but Citycab is more expensive when it comes to waiting time.

Surcharges: There are a total of 7 surcharges that are applicable to the time and day, point of boarding and also whether booking is used.

Midnight Surcharge: Only Citycab has staggered the midnight charges from 11.30p.m to 6a.m. Public Holiday and Peak-

Hour Surcharges: All 3 operators have similar Public Holiday and Peak-hour surcharges.

CBD Area Surcharge: Only Citycab does not charge CBD Area Surcharge on Saturday nights.

Booking Surcharge: Only TIBS has a free current booking surcharge daily from midnight to 6 a.m. Similarly, TIBS has the lowest booking (both current and advanced) surcharge among the operators.

Dear Readers, take note that there will be an additional 10% administrative charge levied on credit card payment. With all the hassle of the additional costs incurred in taxi fares, surcharges should be renamed "sure-charge" instead!

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