Mr. Michaels looked at his watch and grumbled. He tapped his foot on the curb and pulled his jacket up. “Shit, I’m going to be late,” he muttered, looking at his watch once more before hailing a cab. The business convention started without him, on the other side of town, making the slender fox contemplate how valuable he was to the company. [i]Meetings don’t start without the boss.[/i] He now figured his time in the position of “regional sale manager” might be short lived. His ears flickered to the thundering sound of aircraft taking off and landing right above his head, waiting for a cab to stop.

About to check his watch for a third time, another volley of thunder flickered his ears but this was not air traffic. More thunder, heavy and dominant. His auburn fur stood up within his dark suitcoat. The new city put the fox on edge; he now felt someone—or something—on top of him. The bustling terminal of the airport lulled him into a false sense of security; having spun around and craning his neck to stare up at the largest grizzly bear he’d ever seen.

“Hello!” The voice boomed from a good two feet above the fox’s head. “Are you waiting for a cab?”

In the consuming shadow of the great bear, the fox’s tongue twisted and turned before muttering, “Yeah, I am…” He took a quick breath, “I’m late for a meeting on the other side of town.” Mr. Michaels instinctively went for his watch again to reiterate his tardiness but his proximity to the bear derailed any further plea.

“You mind if we share?” the bear asked, looming over the little, well-dressed fox. “I have to be on the other side of town too. And you look like someone who knows what he’s doing!” The bear smiled warmly but to Michaels, a mouthful of sharp daggers, designed to tear meat from bone, was all he could see.

“Uhh,” Michaels pulled his arms close and inched back, “you’re kind of… Big.”

The bear peered down to his bloated belly and chest, almost as if doubting what the fox had said. “Yeah, I guess I kind of am!” He thumped his belly with a paw which gave a low, hollow sound. It proceeded to growl at the fox. “My name’s Ruzam! What’s yours?”

“Michaels,” the fox answered curtly. His eyes only came up to the bear’s stomach which forced his red t-shirt up, proudly putting his belly button on full display. It sagged lazily past the waistline of his cargo shorts but to call the bear “fat” would only be half of the picture; the muscles Ruzam packed beneath that blubber were enormous, especially his arms and legs. Legs that were wider than Michaels himself. The fox inched back to get a handle on the situation but now, taking in his enormity and how the bear so easily lorded over him, Michaels knew that turning tail and bolting was out of the question, colossal or not.

“Well it’s nice to meet you! Let’s catch a cab, shall we?” Ruzam nodded to himself.

Catching a cab to Ruzam meant exactly that. He stepped off the curb and onto the street like a tank plowing through a village, immediately forcing the speeding vehicles to either swerve to avoid the hulking wall of brown fur or lock up the brakes and stop completely. One poor raccoon stopped his taxi only a foot or so away from Ruzam. Normally he would have apologized profusely for the near miss but the size of the bear gave pause to the driver who then shoved the shifter into reverse and stepped on the gas, chirping the tires before getting hung up.

With the attempt to escape, Ruzam lunged forward and sank a plate-sized paw into the front bumper and squeezed, pulling it forward and dragging the rear tires along with it. The metal bumper crumpled easily in his grasp. The horrified driver gave the car more gas which only made the tires squeal but did nothing to escape the grizzly’s grasp. With just one arm, the bear then yanked the car forward like a toy and dropped the front end causing it to bounce on its springs. Shocked, the raccoon threw the shifter into park and waited. He knew better than to challenge these kinds of situations after years of driving a cab.

“Huh, I didn’t know you actually had to catch these things,” Ruzam scratched his head, looking to the fox for approval, “but that was kind of fun!”

The color drained from the raccoon’s face as the bear shoved his oven-sized head through the open passenger window, forcing it open slightly and close enough for him to smell exactly what Ruzam ate for lunch.

“Hey, me and my friend are going across town, you think you can take us there?” He looked around, “Nice car by the way!”

Face to face with the giant, the cab driver simply nodded out of survival instinct and backed himself up against his door as much as he could. There was no reason to protest. Ruzam smiled and pulled his head out, catching the door frame and rocking the car as he did. Walking back, he opened the rear door for the fox.

“He said he’ll take us so get in!” The bear, pleased with himself, stood by like a chauffeur while oncoming traffic honked and swerved to avoid the parked cab—and overgrown bear—in the middle of the street.

Michaels too, feared for his life; he couldn’t say no and obediently sauntered with heavy feet to the cab like a scolded child, cringing when meeting Ruzam’s thick belly pressed into the glass while he happily held the door open amid the traffic and chaos. Nobody dared honk or yell obscenities to the group, not with somebody the size of Ruzam occupying a good portion of the street. Michaels took a seat and quickly slid over as much as possible. He looked out the window with dread, not wanting to see how this could possibly work. Eventually, he had to look over when the car rocked to the side. Ruzam began to shoulder himself into the vehicle which made the tires squeak against the pavement as he pushed the car like a couch across a hardwood floor.

Not to be dismayed, Ruzam lifted his foot and applied some weight, anchoring the car with his sneaker. He took a deep breath and began shoving himself inside, bending the frame to the pavement when he put weight on his foot. The fox’s eyes bulged as the roof gave way around Ruzam’s thick body and folded like tinfoil, revealing the sky above and shattering the rear glass. Michael’s now scooted over as far as he could once Ruzam got his leg in, then another, detaching the front seat from the rails and forcing it into the dashboard. The rear springs sank beneath the grizzly, the frame bowing more with a groan to accommodate the heavy passenger.

“Just a little more,” Ruzam said, trying to hold his breath.

The driver prudently rocked his seat as far forward as he could, frightened he might be crushed against the steering wheel by a furred knee. The bear’s leg flexed with boundless muscle and reshaped the car to its will. Michaels let out an “eep!” when Ruzam’s mighty hip smashed against him, threatening to mash him out of the door like potatoes through a strainer.

[i]”Almost there…[/i], the great bear wheezed. By now, most of the roof had been torn and folded away with the door seam ripped free from its rivets when Ruzam squeezed in. The rear tires ballooned under the mass and were on the verge of blowing. The back seat had also flattened out under Ruzam’s fat rump, giving Michaels only inches of room and closing fast. With one more attempt to get comfortable, the bear heaved himself up and sat down fully, accidentally taking the fox with him. He only had a second to react before his world became blackness and spine-crushing weight.

The inside of the car didn’t fare any better. The backseat, once a comfortable place to sit, was ground to its springs once the bear’s rear met it. Upon impact, the cushioning blew out, leaking foam from the seams. Any surface the bear touched either broke completely or turned to dust in his meaty palms. A curious bear, he felt the need to fiddle.

Satisfied he played with everything, Ruzam announced, “Okay, to the Main Street Hotel!” The scene resembled an overgrown child playing “horsey” with an ill-fitted playmate instead of a simple cab ride. The driver solemnly nodded, unconvinced the car still drove, but put the poor vehicle in gear anyway. The engine strained, climbing the rev-range, and began to inch forward with the sound of metal scraping the pavement. The rear tires lifted slightly to get the car moving, bulging beneath the great mass. The raccoon gave it more gas before his foot went to the floor. The engine coughed and backfired, creaked and protested, but it moved, albeit slowly.

The cab, now twice its weight, merged onto the motorway, lumbering with the momentum of a battleship towed on a flatbed. Cars steered clear seeing Ruzam ride “on” the vehicle instead of in it. But those who got the chance to look saw a cheerful and smiling bear enjoying an afternoon car ride with the sun in his face and wind in his fur. The sides of the car bulged from the hips the metal couldn’t contain, littering the motorway with debris.

“This is the [i]only[/i] way to travel, huh Michaels?”

Michaels had never been sat on by anybody, much less a two-and-a-half-ton grizzly bear. What air could be breathed was done so deliberately, mostly when Ruzam saw something interesting and popped up just enough to give the little fox some room. He had tried to push the bear off but the strength he had was no match for Ruzam doing something so easily as sitting and enjoying himself. Every muscle in his body now lay in the hands of the bear who took in the sights and smells. Ruzam occasionally gave a little wiggle to seat his rump further, flattening the fox into oblivion and rocking the car off course. Michaels swore he could hear his bones snapping beneath the titan’s glutes.

Meanwhile, the raccoon gripped the steering wheel tightly. His knuckles turned white, the car now up to a speed that could be considered ‘bustling,’ and kept an eye on the temperate gauge with the accelerator fully depressed. He could see the gas gauge drop as the car ravenously drank fuel to keep itself moving. The added wind resistance didn’t help the fuel consumption either and coming to a stop with the behemoth happily riding in the back meant risking overheating the brakes and crashing. Ruzam would be fine of course but the rest of them was another matter. No, this car was done for moment Ruzam laid eyes upon it, the raccoon knew. He kept the vehicle in the slow lane and planned for the moment he’d need to start slowing the car to get off the highway. The raccoon never flew a plane but ran through a mental checklist nonetheless; throttle cut, flaps down, gear deployed. He planned accordingly once the exit signs appeared.

Sure enough, the brakes screamed once the pedal was hit. The deceleration had the added bonus of shifting Ruzam’s weight forward, worrying the raccoon as his left knee precariously put more pressure on the driver’s seat. [i]He’d push me straight through dashboard![/i] The entire front passenger compartment had long ago been eaten up and crushed flat by his other leg and foot. The driver controlled their fate.

“Oh, we’re here!” Ruzam took in the sights of the city as the car came to a slow. The engine took a break at red light, backfiring again, while the bear marveled at the architecture and wonderful scents wafting from street vendors selling all kind of hot treats. “Maybe before you leave, we can grab lunch together?”

But Ruzam never got a response as Michaels lay pinned beneath his rump. The fox’s muffled pleading was heard by nobody, much less the bear who pointed his nose in the direction of the tasty food carts just begging to be eaten. The short journey had felt like an eternity and Michaels still didn’t know how long it would last. Every part of his body was practically swallowed by muscle and fat, blanketed with warm, brown fur. Blood rushed to his head with every breath the bear took.

“Here’s the place,” the raccoon sighed, limping the decrepit car to the curb and parking. People gawked. The car now parked, looked deflated as if somebody let the air out of a balloon. Ruzam nodded and mercifully got up off the poor fox, taking more the car with him as he stood up and stretched. Pieces of the car fell from his clothes when his sneakers met the pavement and rose to full height. But when he looked down, couldn’t help but giggle.

“Thanks for letting me sit on your lap! It was kind of cramped back here, huh?. Next time, you can sit on mine instead!!” He reached in and grabbed the fox by the scruff, peeling him off the demolished rear seat. Bits of clothing and fur remained stuck to it while Ruzam did his best to dust him off. Michaels looked like he aged ten years, bruised and battered, sucking down oxygen like water. The bright sun made him dizzy in the bear’s grasp and his legs twitched.

“Oh don’t be nervous,” Ruzam encouraged, seeing his body tremble, “you’ll do great!” He thought more as the taxi hastily lurched away, smoke pouring from the exhaust and pieces of the car falling away like breadcrumbs. The driver didn’t even request payment. “I tell you what,” he held the fox with both paws with Michaels ’s colleagues looking on in horror, “we’ll take a ride later and get ice cream, my treat! Now that I know how to use taxis, we can go anywhere!”