

## Goin' down in Chinatown...

Last night I made a valiant *attempt* to attend a friend-of-a-friend's birthday party. I really did.

I wrote down directions and kept watch over the clock. I showered myself nice 'n clean, applied deodorant with precision, and strapped on the big girl heels. I left the house *on time* (sometimes a magical feat in and of itself), exactly one half hour before said event was to take place. My route was mapped out, my MetroCard at the ready. It was almost party time.

I descended to the F train platform on 6th Avenue, purse full of dollars, face full of makeup. I waited. I watched a guy warble something remotely countrified at uninterested passengers-to-be. I waited. I saw a girl dip precariously near the yellow edge of the platform, her jokey frat-boyfriend threatening to tip her over. I waited. I slid away from a guy who was surely the Valedictorian of the Samuel L. Jackson Finishing School for Badasses, as he mumbled some crazy shit in a nice, deep (and fitting) baritone. I waited. Suddenly -

**F Train Announcer Lady:** "*Static...the F train...static...Queens...static...minutes...static...please...static...patience.*"

**Valedictorian of SLJFSFB:** "*crazy mumble...heh heh heh...crazy mumble...it's HOOOOOT out there!...crazy mumble...heh heh heh...*"

The train eventually came, after I was coated with a slick layer of grimy sweat, and I had about 2 minutes to spare before I was due at the restaurant. No biggie, I thought. There's really a 15-minute cushion built into all party arrivals. 25, if you come bearing gifts. Oh, wait...I didn't have a gift. *Shit.*

Ten minutes later, I exited in the middle of Chinatown. I know my Chinatown. I know my Chinatown...I know my...aw, shit. I don't read Chinese. It's nighttime. It smells. *I don't know my Chinatown.* I am somehow now 20 minutes late. No gift.

I will call a cab! Yes! Cab...cab...cab...why are there no cabs in Chinatown? Why are there so many dark alleys in Chinatown? Why are there so many suspicious-looking men hanging out on the dark corners near the dark alleys in Chinatown? *WHY ARE THERE NO CABS IN CHINATOWN!?!?* I am somehow now 30 minutes late. And I am developing a blister on the heel of my well-shod right foot.

Walk, walk, walk....cab! Cab pulls over! Cab lets me in! To the corner of Orchard and Canal, I say! YES!

(8 minutes later)-

**Cabbie:** "Fuck, miss. I do not think Canal and Orchard join."

**Miss:** "Yes, they do. My friend's text message tells me so. Please take me there."

**Cabbie:** "Oh, wait, I am going the wrong way. You take one dollar off! One dollar!!!"

**Miss:** "Oh....ohhhhkayyyy...."

(another 8 minutes later, after 2 loops through the edge of Little Italy) -

**Cabbie:** "Fuck, miss. Fuck. Construction! Fucking construction! I can't do my fucking job...*insane cabbie mumble*...fucking construction!"

**Miss:** "Uh, you can let me off here."

**Cabbie:** "Fuck. No, I get you there. Five dollar! You only give me five!"

(another 5 minutes later, after swerving OVER a curb to avoid hitting an old man on a bicycle)

**Cabbie:** "Fuck! Look out! Fuck, miss. I can't take you. Five dollars."

**Miss:** (Realizing that "purse full of dollars" meant "purse full with 8 dollar bills")  
"*grumble*....Where IS Orchard and Canal?"

**Cabbie:** "3 blocks THAT way..." (*meaning: 7 that way, 2 that way, and 1 diagonal....oh and, oh, the restaurant is unmarked and ridiculously hidden....*)

**Lesson 1:** Subway platforms are hellish; even more so after 20 minutes of no air

**Lesson 2:** Count your dollars before you leave the house

**Lesson 3:** It's best to get out of the cab before the cabbie utters his tenth "fuck"

**Lesson 4:** "Going down to Chinatown" is not as cutesy as it sounds