

Pamasahe

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The young man had just gotten off dinner with his date at the mall. He didn't have much money — he was a scholar at his university, and she was understanding of that. Despite this, he paid for the bill against her will and all he had left was 200 pesos exactly, which he put in his pocket. As the beautiful night was ending, he brought his date to a taxi and both exchanged the usual “bye”s and “I love you”s as she got into the taxi and left. As he turned around, and began to walk, he bumped into a man.

His initial plan was to just take a tricycle to his apartment which was only a few kilometers away, but it was late at night and he knew that the tricycle drivers would give him dirty looks and charge him at least 50, 60, maybe even 70 pesos. As he was about to cross the road to where the tricycle drivers hung out, a taxi pulled up to his left and began to unload his passengers. He hadn't taken a taxi in years, as he had never needed to. He lived practically next to his university so he only had to walk a quarter of a kilometer, and the local mall was only 30 pesos away from his university — it was quite popular amongst students. So, he assumed the prices would be the same as they were in 2015.

It was very dumb of him to assume the prices of the taxi fare would be the same across 9 years.

As the passengers left, he got in the back. The black leather seats, the tight interior.

“Magkano ba, boss?” (*How much is the drive?*)

“Meter lang.” (*It's a meter.*)

He took a look at the front of the car and the meter started at 40 pesos. That was already a steep price, but he had faith. The driver asked where to, and the young man said his apartment. The taxi driver nodded and began to drive.

The driver was driving slowly. The fare increased with the time and not the distance. What an asshole, he thought. The young man decided to grab his payment, and realized. He had lost his other 100 peso bill.

They hadn't even left the mall and the fee was already 45 pesos. It had only been a minute, and the stress began to kick in. What would he do if the meter was at one hundred pesos already? How would he pay for the taxi?

The young man began to panic in silence. He checked the pockets of his pants, and it held nothing but his phone. He checked the front pocket of his backpack, but there was no trace of money inside of it. He would never leave his money laying around, so someone must have stolen it whilst on the way to the taxi — maybe the man that he bumped into stole it!

The fare was at 50 pesos already before the taxi driver stopped at the side of the road. The young man was puzzled, as the driver got out of the car and walked to the sidewalk, before he began to relieve himself onto the grass. He was baffled. The fare was still ticking down, and the driver was busy watering the plants on the side of the road. This was absolutely baffling, but the young man wasn't one for confrontation. He had a history of being yelled at by close family which made it hard for him to talk to people.

The fare was at 60 pesos. The taxi driver got back into the car and began to drive. He didn't even bother to pause or apologize for the fare. The young man began to do the math in his head — if it gained 20 pesos in 4 minutes, then it means the fare increases by five pesos each minute. The taxi driver reached the guardhouse of the parking lot, and the fare shot up to 75 pesos.

He had just left the mall's premises and was nowhere near his apartment. He knew he was screwed. Now, he was just preparing what he would say. Would he apologize? Would he ask other people on the street if they had spare change? He thought of this really hard, whilst also searching everything he could. He checked his pockets twice, he checked his left pocket, he checked his main bag and he checked his books. It was clear he was panicking neither the driver or the fare cared, as it shot up to 80 pesos.

He knew it was over. It was late at night, quarter till nine. He knew there wouldn't be anybody wandering out, especially on a Thursday night of all times. People still had work tomorrow, people still had school tomorrow. His head began to pulse, the temples of his head began to flare up and his whole body felt like he was being crushed. The fare shot up to 90 pesos, as the driver reeled into the drop-off zone of the apartment.

The young man gave his last hundred peso bill to the driver, as he got out of the car — he didn't even get his change, as the driver sped on out as soon as he shut the door. He stood still for a few seconds with the dim street lights shining light onto him, just thankful that God was watching him. He breathed a sigh of relief, knowing that he's finally okay. He reached into the pockets of his jacket to get his keys, he not only pulled out his keys — but his missing hundred peso bill.