This Cab Goes Out To The Styx

by Paul de Denus

The big guy dropped into my cab midway up Acheron. I'm thinking he's drunk ‘cause he don't look so good, his body ripped like a North-End bus seat, all nooks and crannies in oiled leather, babbling on and on with a full mouth of grumble, explaining how he just whacked some dude, how it's part of the job, you know - mob-work — all shameful-bravado - but he's holding his guts like something's going to spill out - looks wet and shiny back there in the dark.

He says his name is Gregor but his friends call him by his nickname, ‘The Fuse' and I want to say, *“why, you got a short one”* but he looks the type that might take it the wrong way, though it don't matter to me ‘cause I'm just driving and doing my part here.

And he goes on and on - as do the dark streets - telling the tales that I know so well, the ones I listen to every day as they pay and play with twists and turns, shortcuts and back roads, the sorrow and the bluster endlessly swirling around like garbage in the street.

“Hey, Buddy,” he says finally, *“you were supposed to make a right back there”,* and I can see his eyes flash as he reads my ID card on the dash and then he's mouthing, *“ya you, Boatman... you missed my stop”* but I know better, don't say nothing.

All I hope is, he's got the fare when we get to the river.

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