

Lost and Found in the City

When Lila Murray first stepped foot in New York City, her gaze immediately shot upward toward vivid billboards and tall buildings that grazed the clouds. She was surprised to see more taxis than regular cars. Their horns blared around her while the subway rumbled beneath her feet. Most people seemed to be in a hurry to get somewhere; here, running was considered a brisk walk. The city was quite different from her shy personality, but it was still exciting to observe.

Lila had an important interview at 11:30 and it was currently 10:25, so she had some time to explore. The interview was for the job of her dreams, and she felt ready, but her stomach was still twisted in knots. To reassure herself, she clutched her bag filled with extra copies of her resume, her laptop, pencils, and a notepad. She wasn't taking any chances of being unprepared. It was her first interview and she wanted to prove to herself that she was capable of anything.

Lila wandered through Times Square, getting lost in the bustling crowds. Unsure of where she was headed, she came across a long line of people waiting on the sidewalk. Looking up from the crowd, her eyes searched higher and higher until she realized the Empire State Building was towering above her. *I've only seen this in movies*, Lila thought as she pulled out her phone to take a photo. Suddenly, a man in a suit bumped into her, prompting Lila to check the time. *Oh no, where did the time go?*

"Excuse me, please!" she repeated in her rush to reach the street. She awkwardly waved to a taxi heading her way, as she had seen other people do. She felt silly, but it must have worked because the driver pulled over. Sliding into the backseat, she caught her breath and gave the driver the address for her interview. The taxi veered into traffic, only to be met by brake lights at

every intersection. Waiting for the pedestrians to cross the street, she anxiously tapped her foot as if that would make the car move faster.

After a long ten minutes, the car finally came to a stop. Lila paid the driver and jumped out. She looked down at the map on her phone and started walking in one direction, only to realize she was heading the wrong way. Just then, a low-battery alert flashed across the screen. Only 10% remained. Charging her phone was the one thing she had forgotten to do. *Why does the map keep spinning around?* she thought frantically as she circled back to where she had started, staring at almost identical buildings.

Finally spotting the right building number, Lila bolted across the street. This must be it. She entered the lobby, and hesitated in front of the reception desk. She debated whether to approach the person at the desk or call the interviewer and let him know she had arrived. She was running out of time. *Just make a decision*, she urged herself. “Hello. I’m here for the 11:30 interview with Mr. Montgomery,” she finally blurted out. The receptionist frowned slightly, then asked, “Are you sure you have the right address?”

Lila’s stomach dropped. “Oh... I’m not sure,” she responded, barely above a whisper. Heat rushed to her cheeks. She felt people staring at her as she quickly spun through the revolving door, but surely it was her imagination. Looking up, she saw the sign she had missed before. *This is the wrong street. How could I have made such a silly mistake?* she chided herself. There was little time to overthink. She sprinted to hail another taxi, waving more confidently this time. The car barely stopped before she opened the door and jumped in.

Lila gave the driver the correct address this time. Again, the cars moved so slowly that it was probably faster to walk. It was almost 11:30, so she decided to call the interviewer to tell him that she was running late. Hopefully it wouldn’t be a problem...but what if it was? Lila

could just picture a big red X next to her name in the list of many other strong applicants. She always imagined the worst. She held her breath as she dialed the number. Her heart quickened as the phone rang. Just as someone answered, she hesitated and a lump formed in her throat, but she had to say something.

“Hi, Mr. Montgomery. I’m so sorry, but I’m going to be a little late. There’s a lot of traffic, and I went to the wrong building,” Lila managed to say, her voice hoarse but sincere. She imagined a long pause on the other side, but it was only a brief moment before he assured her it was fine. Lila exhaled a sigh of relief.

Once again, the taxi reached its destination and Lila quickly paid the driver. She walked toward the building, sure this was the right one. Once inside, the receptionist greeted her with a friendly smile.

“Hi, I’m Lila Murray. I’m here for the 11:30 interview with Mr. Montgomery. Sorry, I’m a bit late,” Lila breathed, grateful for the warm welcome.

“Oh, it’s all right. Please have a seat here.” The woman gestured toward a small couch. *You got this, don’t worry*, Lila thought as she sat down, loosening the tight grip on her bag. The morning had not gone as planned, but she had made it, and she was ready.

“Lila Murray?” A voice called out. This was it. “Here I am,” Lila replied in a steady voice, sitting up tall with her shoulders back. She smoothed her skirt, lifted her chin, and counted down to herself... 3, 2, 1, go. Lila stepped forward through the doors without hesitating, a small smile on her face. Somehow, getting lost in the city had helped her find her confidence.