

# Lost in the city

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LOST IN THE CITY Edward P. Jones's namesake story "Lost in the City," in his collection of short stories, *Lost in the City*, is set in USA's capital, Washington, D. C. and it is based on the story of a woman who has received word that her mother has died. Lydia Walsh is a successful attorney. She is also lonely and desperate. When the hospital calls in the middle of the night stating her mother has died "...twenty minutes ago..." Lydia instructs them to not to "...put that sheet over her face until I get there...". Lydia then proceeds to tell the man beside whom she's been sleeping, a person whose name she cannot remember and appears ignorant of the fact that her mother has died. In between her preparation to leave and the arrival of the taxi Lydia takes two shots of cocaine, "...One line,' she said. ' One line and no more...' with the gold razor blade she spread out the cocaine on the black marble tray and inhaled a line..."; an action she repeats several times once inside the cab. What transpires in between are snapshots of Lydia's times with her mother intermingled with recollections of past times with the man beside whom she was sleeping, juxtaposed to the person with whom she lost her virginity, a man that Lydia recalls, "... for the thirty days during the month of her birthday...sent her the reddest roses she had seen up to then: one on the first day, two on the second...an so on...". The cab arrives and Lydia informs the driver that her mother has died. Once inside the taxi Lydia instructs him to, "...get me lost in the city...I'll pay you. I have the money... Try ever so hard...". The cabbie obeys though dumbfounded that her requested destination is not to the hospital where her mother, "...lies moldering..." Yet the sights along the way of getting "...lost in the city..." take Lydia Walsh ever so closer to home-into the emotional space of

remembrance. Lydia recalls a trip she paid for, and made with her mother to "... the Holy Land..." What follows are memories of her father who had to make a living pushing a broom, and now she was paid in one year more than her parents had earned in both their lifetimes. Soon she would pass a point in her life where she would have earned more than all her ancestors put together, all of them, all the way back to Eve. The cab continues, "... on up 5th Street...[where]...her father had died at 1122 5th Street in a back room on the top floor where they had lived when she was four..." Lydia recalls the event. "' I'm sorry for all this,' her father had said on his death bed to her mother. ' I'm sorry for all this, Cornelia.' They had not known that she was standing in the doorway watching them. And now at the death of her mother Lydia was watching them again. " Yet in the present time of the story it is Lydia who is being watched, her eyes upon herself, and with no one to witness her loneliness and isolation. Professionally and financially successful, Lydia has no one with whom to share her grief. She sits at the mercy of the hands of a taxi driver whose purpose it is to "... Just keep driving and get us lost in the city..."-a city that is filled with memories of her life-a city that is home.