

WHEN Joy LIES BETWEEN TWO CITIES

A SOUTH HOLLAND-BORN YOUNG ADULT NAVIGATES THE TRANSITION FROM HOMETOWN TO BIG CITY

By Isaiah Easter

There was a time when I was young, where South Holland was my day-to-day adventure, and both my friends and the town around me yielded new experiences every day. I remember when I was about ten years old, and almost every beat of life brought new joy to my face. I had just crossed into a new sense of independence. In it, the world's discoveries seemed at arm's reach. At least until the streetlights came on. It is here the happiest of my childhood memories lie. Full of grass-stained jeans and scraped-up knees, my youth was truly vibrant.

Every now and again, though, in this time, I found myself amongst a larger marching ground, Chicago. On field trips and family days, we'd load up the car and drive out to what seemed like a faraway land. Here, there were buildings far taller than any trees I had climbed and more people on one street than I had ever seen in a Walt's or Jewel. Trips to museums and city landmarks encapsulate our adventures. Each one was a new thrill ride and a world that was to be discovered. But despite this, it was always South Holland, my home, where my true joy and comfort resided. The excitement from a city thrill would wear off after some time. Or at least that's how it was at first.

Soon, my solace of firefly catching and street basketball came to a screeching halt. In the moment, I was not able to feel these delights wane. But at some point, I took a step back and saw that those days had been long gone. I supposed that it was what it meant to grow up. Still though, I relished in my time exploring who I could be. I was discovering in new ways, identifying my passions and realizing my path. My mind and body radiated a bliss that mirrored my youth. But like a mirror, this elation did not show the whole of me. For behind this was desire that longed for change. And Chicago became the picture of the dream.

So, I enrolled in college, packed my bags for a new home, and moved into the city where I felt my strivings could flourish. Here, I found new inspiration to create and collaborate. I have been able to expose myself to a new lifestyle and new people, traversing great heights of wonder and exposing paths for my future. And now within less than two years, I've curated a registry of knowledge and perspective.

Yet, in this reveling journey, at times of quiet and self-reflection, I am reminded of the city's likeness to a thrill ride. Of how its great heights and enjoyment can be juxtaposed with daunting lows and disheartenment. And that the high of the ride often lasts only for so long. It is in these moments of introspection that my mind wanders back to South Holland. The place where, though I may not have the solution to my strivings, I have built the grounds for my aspiration. So, I venture Chicago and walk the lively streets, illuminated by the glow of the city, all while wearing my grass-stained jeans reminding me of where my ambitions began... the Village of South Holland.