

City That Raised Me

By Judah S.

They say this city is cold.

But they don't mean the weather—
though yeah,
winter bites like it's personal,
wind cutting through layers
like it knows your name.

No—
they mean the kind of cold
that settles in people,
in silence,
in streets where sirens
sound more familiar than lullabies.

I grew up where
you learn directions by memory,
not maps—
“don't go past that block,”
“stay on this side after dark,”
“keep your head up,
but not too high.”

Where the bus might be late,
but trouble never is.

Where corner stores
double as community centers,
and everybody knows somebody
who didn't make it out
the way they were supposed to.

But nobody talks about
how warm it is too.

How summer feels like freedom
spilled across concrete—
kids running through open hydrants,
laughter echoing off brick walls
like the city's finally breathing.

How music leaks from passing cars,

windows down,
like every street got its own soundtrack.

How strangers become family
without asking—
a nod, a look,
a “you good?”
that actually means something.

This city raised me
on contradictions.

Taught me how to be tough
and soft
at the same time.

How to carry weight
you didn’t ask for
and still show up
like you chose it.

Yeah—
it’s cold.

But not empty.

Because under the gray skies,
past the headlines,
beyond what people think they know—

there’s a heartbeat here.

And if you’ve lived it,
felt it,
survived it—

you don’t just live in this city.

This city lives in you.