

Good evening, everyone.

When I was a kid, I would often sit on the swings in our backyard, dreaming of the adventures I wanted to have. Little did I know that my journey would begin with a simple step--and an unexpected challenge. Five years ago, I moved to the city, eager and full of hope. But it wasn't long before the hustle overwhelmed me. As a small-town person, the towering buildings seemed like giants, and I felt lost in the crowd. I missed the familiar faces and the easy pace of my hometown.

One day, as I was wandering through a local market, a street artist offered to paint my portrait. I sat down, curious and somewhat hesitant. As he painted, we talked, and he shared stories of his travels from different parts of the world. His passion was infectious, and it lit a spark in me. He told me, "Every city can become your home if you discover its heart."

Inspired by his words, I started exploring the city differently. Instead of rushing through my days, I visited community events, volunteered at local shelters, and took long walks in unfamiliar neighborhoods. Slowly, I began to see the city not as a concrete jungle, but as a place full of stories, each waiting to be discovered.

This journey taught me more than just the physical layout of a place. It taught me resilience and adaptability. I learned that stepping outside my comfort zone could open doors to beautiful experiences and friendships I never imagined.

Today, as I stand before you, I realize how much those early swings in the backyard prepared me. They were just the beginning of a journey--a journey that continues to unfold.

Thank you.