

**MY CHICAGO, MY CHANGING TOWN**  
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I have been here in Chicago

For my entire life.

All thirty-three years of my existence on Planet Earth.

I have watched countless buildings

Rise and fall,

Spring up and disappear

Into rubble.

All through my childhood,

I skated at the Rainbow Roller Rink.

The only roller rink on the city's North Side,

It stood just a few short blocks from my home.

I remember that cool atmosphere

With bright flashing neon lights, and

Nineteen eighties music blaring from the speakers.

"Don't you want me, baby?

Don't you want me, ooohhh?"

At eight years old,

I dreamt about being an "oh so cool"

And hip adult.

I used to rent those ugly tan skates

With the bright orange wheels.

How uncool.

CTA—

Ah! The strange changes with CTA!

I remember when the “Green Limousine”

Was actually green.

Busses had nice cushy seats.

The trains had shutter doors

Instead of the sliding

Star Trek Enterprise doors of today.

The CTA transfers were light paper whiffs

Of what closely resembled toilet paper.

You had to be careful removing them from your wallet,

Least you tear the poor things in half.

On Sunday, a Super Transfer

Could take you all over the place.

Bus passes were funny imaginative little cards

You just showed to the bus driver or train conductor.

There was the “Pay on the Train” sign downstairs

In the station that pissed me off so bad.

My transfer would expire by the time

I caught the damn thing.

All the train stations were A or B stops

With an occasional AB stop too.

I remember the guessing games I would play,  
Trying to remember what stops my train would stop at.  
I remember seeing cigarette machines inside grocery stores.  
You could ride your bike on any sidewalk.  
Nobody cared.  
There wasn't an overflow of condos,  
And more condos,  
And more and more  
Condos.  
The Howard Street Station looked like a gigantic green aviary  
Housing numerous, fat, dirty, little pigeons.  
Once upon a time,  
The house where I spent the first seven years of my life  
Stood.  
The House on Grace Street  
With its green metal railings and concrete steps.  
A great big flowering bush  
Grew in the front  
Over a row of flat white rocks.  
The last time I walked down that street  
To view the place of my origin,  
It was gone.  
My still-beating heart had been wrenched from my chest.

There stood an ugly-ass condo on its spot.  
All greenery gone.  
The once beautiful, looming backyard  
Supplanted by another  
Ugly-ass condo behind the first.  
I used to envy people  
Who have lived in other places,  
Who got a chance to move  
From place to place to place.  
But I don't anymore.  
This is home.  
I am a Chicagoan.  
I don't have to move anywhere else  
To experience something different, something changed.  
Chicago  
Is changing all the time.