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RESPECT STREET

Evan Mychal Smith

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By Evan Mychal Smith
Photo Illustration by Blake Z. Rong

Sometimes I just step back, look at myself, and marvel at what I've become. Whatever happened to Evan, the shy little boy who was afraid to hurt anyone's feelings? If I had to answer that, I would say he probably jumped off a cliff while holding hands with the Evan who allowed himself to be walked on like a human welcome mat. Good riddance to the both of them if you ask me. Mama said, "If you don't say you're the best, no one else will," and for a long time I thought it quite arrogant to display my strengths. I wanted so much to be modest, to t in, to be one with the crowd.

Now, I can't get enough of myself.

If I were a food, I would want a lifetime supply of myself. If I were a car, I would wash myself twice a day: once before I drove out in the morning and again after I parked myself at night. If I were a dog, I would do nothing but eat and sit in front of the television, but I would treat myself like I was Best In Show – and I'm ne with that. Years and years have passed by while my body has been marked up with footprints of my friends, family, and authority gures. Respect is supposed to be a two-way street, but I always turned left. I let myself take the hit every time there was a con ict and my heart grew weary of constant torture.

I'm not your plaything.

I'll tell you right now, if you see me driving up to Respect Street, you had better look both ways these days.