

Brasilia

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THE SIXTEEN MINISTRIES line up like soldiers ready for war; each one prepared to fulfill the different aspects that a government needs: one for health, another for education, and so on. The sun shines down on the city, scorching the plain of grass that lies in between the parallel ministries. At the end of the row stand the two plates that make up part of the congress—one upside down, and one right side up. In between, the rest of the congress stands tall with a thin strip of space separating the two buildings, and a bridge connecting them. The presidential palace and many others lie beyond that. This is the city of Brasilia, which is not only a planned city but a planned capital.

This was the place where I was born and raised, and as I drove past the glass cathedral, which reminds me of a two chicken hands upside-down, I thought about

leaving it again. When I was four, my parents and I moved to the West Coast of the United States, and I sure didn't have a choice. But this time I did. I could've told them no, that I wanted to stay in the city that was built for simplicity and functionality but still held a strange beauty. The city for which Juscelino Kubitcheck had summoned many architects to propose a plan of what the city would look like. Two had won, Oscar Niemeyer and Lucio Costa, and their designs had been combined. This was the city that my grandfather helped build.

My window rolled down, I inhaled the smell of a dry, scorching metropolis that had always caused me to remember my lip balm. The city had been planned for something grand, but it could be considered a failure; nothing to be proud of for its known monotony. But something about it will never let me go. It will never

have the natural beauty of other Brazilian cities, the exquisite disorganization. It will always be plain, not much worth visiting.

When I got to New Orleans, which is where we decided to move upon abandoning my hometown once again, it was a hot August day. I walked out of the crowded airport into humid weather. Cockroaches littered the floor; they were humongous. The thin sidewalks of Brasilia held the small, harmless looking bugs.

This strange American town was home to these creatures I had never imagined. Our host came to pick us up, and drove us uptown. From my first car ride in the city of New Orleans, I fell in love with it. But all the while, when I was discovering more about my new city with its majestic oaks and colorful people, I was thinking about my old one. The highways in New Orleans curved

and brought me to many different places at once, complicated and badly explained. I thought about the two huge highways that crossed my home city, letting anyone get just about anywhere. The highways in Brasilia are also the ones where many people are killed trying to cross, not wanting to use the underground crosswalks, which are poorly lit and a haven for muggers, not to mention the stench of urine.

Brasilia, my city, was an unpopular city, but New Orleans was the opposite. For those who had the means, from Brasilia they could travel to other cities, more exciting cities, for the weekend or free days. They decided for trips like these over trips to malls around town. Sure, Park Shopping is where I first sat on Santa Claus' lap, and where I spent endless hours with my big-headed cousins in

"This strange American town was home to these creatures I had never imagined."

The author and the designer work hand in hand to create a verbal-visual strategy that exemplifies the subject matter. The structured typographic format allows for a symmetrical placement of the pull quote simulates a piazza in either city. In Brasilia by Porto, the city of New Orleans and the architecturally planned capital of Brazil are contrasted.

