**A Cosmopolite in a Café**

*Narrator sitting in chair in her room facing camera head on. Talking to the camera. YouTube styled vlog shot.*

Narrator:

I held a theory that since freshmen year that going abroad didn’t really change you that much. We’d hear of how kids were so *changed.* We’d see the Instagrams in foreign places but they were really just as drunk and small minded as they were before. Here’s my story of why.

Imagine the bar: the chairs were a few barstools that seem more in the way than useful, everyone’s yelling at each. Is it because of how busy or the alcohol of the night. Guys are ordering drinks for all the familiar faces and the music’s beat keeps the room alive. It was a typical college bar scene.

*Tighten in on narrator:*

The student I met that night was named Alex. A lack of space to sit while I waited for my friends forced me into the following conversation. We small talked as usual and quickly began to talk about his (her) study abroad experience. Alex spoke of the world as if it was all familiar to them as the back of his/her hand. To him, the world was the size of a pong ball. His stories had him skipping from country to country with such ease. Time zones meant nothing to him and oceans no larger than a bathtub. He mentioned street markets in South Korea and then suddenly skydiving in Interlaaken. Then you were eating a meal with him in Chile. Then in the Grand Canyon taking a morning run. But not for long before the beaches of Cancun called you away. An apéro in Paris before a trdelnik in Prague. He’d seen it all and you felt confident that could advise presidents on their foreign policy.

I finally found him. The student who truly became changed abroad. I listened to him talk waiting for him to mention how he disliked the refugees of a regional conflict or the way that New York and Paris were just too similar. But he never did. Every place he mentioned was just as wondrous and distinct as the last.

As Alex talked of his adventure, I thought about the study abroad meeting I had attended a week earlier. The director had warned that students bunch together and don’t interact with locals. That they stay within their comforts and are insulted when foreigners aren’t used to their habits like how loud the speak, restaurant customs, or what they wear. She warned of students who just refused to adjust to their new surroundings and simply FaceTimed their entire abroad experience away or spent most of their money on things not experiences. But I was excited. She’d been wrong. I had found someone who went abroad and truly saw the world.

I began to wonder where he came from. Was it a big city that made him more inclined to spend money actually experiencing the world or a small town where boredom ruled and forced adventure to be worked for

(IN SCENE)

You haven’t mentioned anything about your hometown, your family, or where you came from?

*Alex slams drink down*

Alex:

That is not a question I like to be asked. Why does it matter where I grew up. Is it fair to judge everything I saw and learned because of where I came from? I’ve seen kids from big towns be completely closed off to the world and small town Americans solely focused on the big picture of the world. When I was abroad I saw the son of a small farmer sharing a meal with a politician's daughter. And I’ve seen students who buried themselves in libraries their whole time missing out completely on the world around them. I learned what I learned and don’t justify it by explaining where I came from or my family.

Narrator:

I feel like the people who go abroad are ones who go to say they went, not change themselves. I just wanted to see what made you going abroad different.

Alex:

Well I traveled before studying abroad. Family vacations, school trips, and internships have let me see the world many different times. It was not just one time. I’ve been on twelve different trips around the world. I’ve met an Chieftain who sends for his shoes in San Francisco and a farmer who won a prize for poetry about surfing. My family pays for a room in Cairo and another in Melbourne all year around. I’ve got a towel waiting for me on the beach in Bali and the deli knows how I like my sandwiches in Detroit and Philly. It’s a mighty little old world. But what’s the use of bragging about how my family paid for this. It’ll be a better world when we quit bragging about how much we can afford and how exclusive the clubs were just because we had a good time instead of what we learned.

Narrator:

You do seem like you learned a lot! I’m not trying to deny that. Just wondering about how you were able to do this.

Alex:

It’s childish at this point. Someday all this pride in money will lose its shine and we’ll all just be reminiscing on the places we saw and what we learned, not what we bought as it should be.

Narrator:

But while you were in all of these places did you never think to go wild somewhere.

Alex:

Not really. This hunk of floating rock has so much more to see than a giant hotel rooms. I’ve met plenty of people focused on just the shopping while abroad. Kids who just go to Rome for the purses and China for the silks. Students walking through Versaille and compare it to their houses. Those ideas dont suit me. I’m not the type to compare like that.

*Drinks drink*

Anyway, I think I see a friend of mine I need to chat with. Au revoir.

*Alex leaves.*

*Back in room*

Narrator

I remember thinking about this stranger and wondering how study abroad had missed him. He was my new inspiration and I believed in his experience. I remember thinking about how this wonderful adventure would change me to grow beyond college life. When my thoughts were interrupted by a commotion in the bar. I stood up and watched as Alex and a stranger seemed to be fighting, loudly. I couldn’t really tell what about but Glasses were breaking and people began shoving each other. The two were escorted out by the doorman, still insulting each other the entire time.

I asked one of the bystanders what happened. “The man in the J Crew shorts started getting annoyed because someone insulted his watch.”

“But he’s doesn’t see the world like that. He traveled the world and seen all its wonders.”

“And he’s the son of one of the heads of Morgan Stanley and wouldn’t stand to see someone knock it.”