



Josefine Westre, 1L

Lycée Leclerc

8,rue Poincaré

67700 Saverne

17 ans, 1^{ère} L

Catégorie : Récit personnel

Professeur : Valérie Willé

Lycée Leclerc

8, rue pOincaré

67700 Saverne

A nightmare

In these three last months I have figured out that I have had a really good life, filled with joy and love. I truly feel like a blessed person with loving and caring parents. Never have they hit me, yelled at me for no reason or punished me in any sort of way. Some may say that I've had a way to easy life, no though paths or difficult events. Until I flied 1701 km to stay with a completely different family, which also proved to have completely different ways of thinking and living.

When I arrived in Paris, after a nerve-wracking flight and a heartbreaking goodbye with my family I was ready for 9 month exchange in France. Headed to meet my new family, I wanted to get it over with. Of course I had expectations, how the family would be, how the house would look like, would we have anything to talk about. All these thoughts as I was sitting on the train to Strasbourg, next to a very "charming" man in no shirt, military pants and a big tattoo on his right arm, while the scent of smoke and cheap perfume crept in to my nose. I ate a bag of chips to calm my nerves; somehow eating is an excellent therapy for me. You just relax and eat. I was getting closer to my destination and just a few moments later I



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I remember getting off the train, dragging my life in a suitcase with me. I also remember seeing other exchange students getting off and being welcomed by big families with signs saying “bienvenue!!” I looked around not really sure who I was looking for. Would they all be here to welcome me, maybe just my host mom or host dad? After 10 minutes my excitement had jacked down a few notches. After 15 minutes I thought, “did I get off at the right station,” “should I have met them somewhere else,” as these thoughts ran through my mind I saw a little Moroccan man walked stressed towards me. My intestines kicked me hard and I walk against him with my enormous bag and an enormous smile. I tried my best at my beginner French and we walk towards the car taking me to my new “home.”

To feel home in a place that isn't your home is hard, you have to get used to the fact that you're in a different country with different ways of living. I don't know how all the families in France are but I got a very good idea how this specific family was, through what I would say was 3 hard months. The smell is different, the buildings different, but most of all the rules are different. I was brought up in a way (Scandinavian way perhaps) that they never could imagine and my new family had rules I never could imagine. It was a big clash. I had no idea how they wanted me to do things because they never told me. And for me with my lack of French skills in my second month, I couldn't understand it all. You try and you try, and sometimes you're just that tired that you agree to everything they say, nod and put on a nice smile. Trying to speak another language is hard in itself, and on top of that, my host family complained about my French, made fun of it and didn't want to explain things I didn't understand. Home was not feeling like home.

I had been in France for 2 months when things started getting worse. I got yelled at for things like drinking water in my room, for putting the clothes in the wrong box in the perfect system, having the knife resting on the plate and for forgetting to give her back 60 cents for when we were out eating. So many small things for me were big things for them. My host dad didn't say “hello” or “how are you”, and after a while I stopped doing it too because I knew that he didn't really want to talk to me. Things started to build up and i got loaded with problems and issues and that I kept for myself and my parents at home. You don't want to confront them with these problems because you don't know them that well, I was scared



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and all I wanted was to give up and go home. I cried when I came home from school. I could barely concentrate in some classes because I wanted to cry because I knew what was waiting for me at home. That day, when I sat on the train thinking I was headed to a place where I would experience so many good things, I would only experience the bad things. This was not what I wanted this to be like, I wanted to live in a place where I could easily see my friends, where I would be warmly welcomed home from school, and where we could have a casual conversation about school and how our day was.

I finally decided to call the organization and tell them about the situation, I had had enough. My dream year in France shouldn't be like this! After long talks with the organization they told me I could change, luckily for me I had a good friend who was willing be my new family. But everything wasn't all happily ever after, yet. I had to speak to my family, they knew that I had talked to the organization and wanted to change. No warm welcomes after that. I came home and my host mom wanted to speak to me. I knew in the tone of her voice and by the color of her face, that she was not pleased. I don't know a word to describe how I felt while she stood in front of me yelling in my face. She blamed me and the way I was raised for all the problems that had occurred. It hurt. Hurt doesn't even come close to how I felt, standing alone in a country with only these people around me, gathering together blaming me. Laughing together about how ridiculous and dumb I was. I'm afraid to say that I'm still here, but more excited than ever to move. I have learned one thing so far, that I love my parents more than anything and I will be grateful of them for the rest of my life.