

# When a dream meets reality

## My first week in Indiana

Dear diary,

It has been a week since I arrived in America, and so much has already happened. I met my new family, survived my first day of school, tried to get along with my host brother and sister, and I'm learning new words every single day. Everything seems to be going exactly the way every exchange student told me it would, yet something still doesn't feel quite right.

I can't hide from you how scared I am. I left my house, my family, my friends, my whole life, just to come here. Doing an exchange year has always been my dream, but now that I'm finally living it, I'm not so sure anymore if it was the right choice.

My host family was waiting for me at the airport with a sign that said "Benvenuta in Indiana," and just like that, in a blink of an eye, I suddenly had a new mom, a new dad, a sister, and a brother. I miss my real parents. I miss my brother. I miss my home. No one ever warned me it would hurt this much.

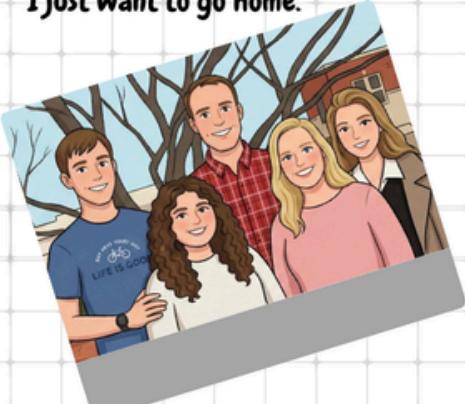
The agency in Italy told me that I have to cut the relationships with my family and friends for a while. I have to hear them less often, maybe once a week. Basically, they told me that I have to hit the road all by myself. But I am not sure that I want to leave my life behind just to start this new one. I don't feel grown enough to spread my wings.

I can barely understand what people say here. They speak so fast, and the accent is completely different from what I learnt at school. My high grade in English suddenly feels useless. All my teachers prepared me for British English with its clear pronunciation and slow pace. But here? Americans talk at lightning speed and cut half their words. Sometimes I just stare at them and hope my face doesn't look as lost as I feel.

How am I supposed to bond with my host family if half the time I don't even understand what they're talking about? I can't keep asking them to repeat themselves. I'm afraid they'll get tired of me eventually.

And then there's school. Yesterday was my first day. Everyone seems friendly, but they all already have their own friends. They've known each other since kindergarten, and I just got here from nowhere. I feel like I don't fit anywhere. We have different hobbies, different styles, different languages, different cultures. It's like I landed in a world where everything works differently, and I'm the only one who didn't get the instructions.

I just want to go home.



TO BE CONTINUED...

Ginevra Mancusi