

# The Foreigner In My Hometown

by  
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I've been to cities that never sleep. I've been to places that hadn't been mentioned to me before, outlandish places. I mingled with different people. Different from me. I learned new habits. I learned new customs and how to respect them.

When it was time to go back home, I stopped in cities in Europe. Europe that used to be big and foreign, was now small and home, familiar and recognisable. Eager and happy, I arrived at my hometown, Valladolid, in Spain. Looking for my very personal treasure, my memories, my background, my past.

Sadly I discovered my town had betrayed me. It didn't keep my memories. It didn't keep my hideaways. The hospital I was born in, wasn't a hospital any more. My first school didn't exist and my high school had been transformed. As was my university. My town that was said by outsiders to be dull and grey now had a glorious rainbow all over it. The many historical buildings that used to blend unnoticeable, were as if on display now, fresh and bright colours in its architraves and cornices with a clean facade allowing them to stand above anything else in powerful domination.

Old buildings that were knocked down, made way for beautiful avenues. Shops that just showed their merchandise were now flashy and stylish, with neon signs blinding whoever dared to look at them. Empty, open spaces that served for young people to sit and sing, around a guitar, now had colourful flowers and big trees.

Visitors happily walk around the town, open-mouthed, marvelling at buildings and avenues. I also happily walk around the town, open-mouth, as I go down the streets that witnessed my first steps. But, while I praised how the ugly duckling became a beautiful swan, I looked for my favourite spots and couldn't find them.

Where Mum took me to see the toys I was going to ask from Santa, where I hid with friends tasting, for the first time, the burning of a cigarette, where I

had my first kiss, where I went to celebrate with friends. It was more beautiful, but it wasn't my town.