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Dear Karlin

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This is a letter to the neighborhood I lived in in Prague during my Geography FSP study abroad, where I found a 'home' in the city:

Dear Karlín,

Some of my best memories from Prague were with you. You sit right on the edge of the city, close enough to the bustling metropolis but far enough away to have your own identity. You are small but incredibly full of life. You are the product of a changing city. You used to be overrun by factories, their smog blackening your skies, until a flood demolished all of this past life. Now, you are "hipster," a new neighborhood that emerged from the destruction when the water receded. Your many cafes and trendy bars draw young people to your streets early in the mornings and late into the night. I loved strolling through your parks and down to your banks of the Vltava river. Every morning, I watched you wake up as I started my run and watched you go to sleep out my 3rd floor apartment window. My days were shaped by you, Karlín.

I would often wander your streets and clear my head. I would walk to Vítkov Park on top of the hill and look down at you from above, watching people and cars and animals going about their days. I loved to spend long afternoons sitting outside your cafes, working on papers while sampling teas. I felt at peace whenever I was with you, and I needed that desperately. I needed you as a home.

Prague was hard for me at times, and you were always a happy place amidst it all. You were waiting after some long, stressful days. You were the setting for many of my favorite meals with roommates and picnics in parks. You were bustling with happy people on Friday nights, and perfectly peaceful on Sunday mornings. I felt like a local with you, not just another one of the thousands of tourists taking over the city center of Prague. I liked that people spoke Czech with you and I was forced to leave my American bubble. You provided me with a window into Czech culture, and welcomed me in with open arms. I am so thankful I let you in, too.

I want you to know how much I appreciated you, Karlín. I had challenges in Prague, but you were always a bright spot. Through you I connected with this new city, and got to know the Prague beyond the "Top 10 Places to See" list. You gave me the confidence to find a place for myself. Thank you for being a happy place, helping me find a home in Prague, and bringing me peace when I needed it most. While it has been a year since I have seen you, I still think of you often.

Love always,

Andie