

# 5 [PATIENCE] LAUREN FORESTER

**College Degree Program:** General Management

**Study Abroad Program:** New Zealand

*"When I was fifteen, I met New Zealander, Mitchell Green, who quickly became one of my greatest friends. My adoration for Mitchell, my desire to explore someplace different than the rest of my peers, and my lack of bilingual abilities ensured that New Zealand was the perfect place for me to study abroad."*





"Here we go, my first class of the best semester of my life," I thought as I strolled into my classroom in New Zealand. I looked around the room trying to pick out who would be my first Kiwi friend. A girl in the third row, with long light brown hair, had a seat available right next to her. That is where I went.

"Hello! How are you today?" I smiled as I sat my notebook on the desk. The girl peered up at me expressionless and speechless. Did I say something wrong? Did I forget deodorant this morning? Did my American accent offend her? The girl, who was supposed to be my very first friend in this strange new place, proceeded to gather her things. She got up from her seat and moved a few spaces away from me. I was stunned and embarrassed. I sat down alone. No one came in to rescue me. No one said a single word to me in class. This was the start to the best semester of my life.

Too many thoughts raced through my head. Where do I go from here? I am usually so great at making friends. What is wrong with me? How do I get them to like me? Fortunately, I easily formed friendships with my fantastic roommates. Unfortunately, we were all American exchange students yearning for friendships with New Zealanders.

No one talked to me on my thirty-minute walk to school. No one would have a conversation with me before or after class. That was the case every day, until I met Rebecca.

"Hey, are you from America?" Rebecca asked me with a blank stare.

"Oh, yeah," I said. "How would you know?" I had not said a single word to this girl and she was actually talking to me!

"You have a Five-Star notebook and you can only get those in America," she said.

Our conversation continued and I was doing everything in my power to keep my excitement from pouring out of my facial expressions. "Be cool," I told myself, "just keep your cool, Lauren."

We parted ways and I was confetti. I sprinkled my happiness on everyone I encountered that day. I had made my very first friend from New Zealand and I could hardly wait until I could see her again the next week.

Seven excruciating days later, I arrived to class early, ready to see my new friend Rebecca. I waited for her to walk through the door. Nothing. She did not show. The next week went by with no Rebecca. My hopes and dreams of our friendship were crumbling in front of my very eyes. Just when I thought all was lost, 21 days after our first meeting, Rebecca walked into our classroom. She was not my friend instantaneously. I met her a few more times before we exchanged numbers. I met her a few more times after that until we studied together. We eventually even had dinner together. Rebecca came to my birthday party, she shared her love of Instagramming food with me, she came to my going away party and she gave me a supremely special going away present.

Even though I struggled immensely to make friends at school, patience allowed me to make some of the most incredible friends I have ever had the pleasure of knowing. I hope that patience will allow others to experience the unfathomable friendship I found in Rebecca.