

La dernière table

A rainy café, one free chair and a card that needs the right words. Nora and Julien discover they have more than a table in common.

Le café est plein. Dehors, il pleut et les gens restent à l'intérieur. Nora cherche une place avec sa tasse à la main. Un homme est seul à une petite table, près de la fenêtre. Il enlève son sac de la deuxième chaise.

« Vous pouvez vous asseoir ici. » Nora pose sa tasse et son manteau. « Merci. J'attends mon bus. » L'homme s'appelle Julien. Il attend aussi, mais il ne regarde pas la rue. Devant lui, il y a une carte et un stylo.

« C'est pour ma sœur, explique-t-il. Elle ouvre un restaurant demain. Je veux écrire quelque chose de bien. » Sur la carte, Nora lit : Bon courage pour ton nouveau restaurant. Julien fait une petite grimace. « Elle travaille beaucoup. Je ne veux pas lui parler encore de travail. »

Nora réfléchit. « Pourquoi pas : Je viens demain. Garde-moi une place ? » Julien sourit et écrit la phrase. « C'est mieux. Et c'est vrai. » Ils parlent du restaurant, puis de leur quartier. Nora habite à deux rues du café. Julien aussi. Ils connaissent la même boulangerie, mais ils ne se connaissent pas.

La pluie s'arrête. Le bus de Nora arrive bientôt. Elle met son manteau, puis regarde la carte. « Votre sœur fait des desserts ? » « Une très bonne tarte au citron. Vous voulez venir avec moi ? » Nora sort son téléphone. « Oui. Mais j'arrive à sept heures. » Julien lui donne l'adresse, puis range sa carte. Nora note leur rendez-vous avant de partir. Le lendemain, elle arrive au restaurant à sept heures, comme prévu.

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The Last Table

Read the French first, then use this translation whenever it helps.

The café is full. Outside, it is raining and people are staying indoors. Nora looks for a seat with her cup in her hand. A man is alone at a small table near the window. He takes his bag off the second chair.

"You can sit here." Nora puts down her cup and her coat. "Thank you. I'm waiting for my bus." The man's name is Julien. He is waiting too, but he is not looking at the street. In front of him, there is a card and a pen.

"It's for my sister," he explains. "She's opening a restaurant tomorrow. I want to write something good." On the card, Nora reads: Good luck with your new restaurant. Julien makes a little face. "She works a lot. I don't want to talk to her about work again."

Nora thinks. "Why not: I'm coming tomorrow. Save me a seat?" Julien smiles and writes the sentence. "That's better. And it's true." They talk about the restaurant, then about their neighborhood. Nora lives two streets away from the café. So does Julien. They know the same bakery, but they do not know each other.

The rain stops. Nora's bus is coming soon. She puts on her coat, then looks at the card. "Does your sister make desserts?" "A very good lemon tart. Would you like to come with me?" Nora takes out her phone. "Yes. But I'm arriving at seven." Julien gives her the address, then puts his card away. Nora notes their appointment before leaving. The next day, she arrives at the restaurant at seven, as planned.

Vocabulary in this story

These meanings fit the story. You can keep reading without learning every item.

une place - a seat or a place to sit, here

près de la fenêtre - near the window

vous asseoir - sit down, using the polite or plural vous form

J'attends - I'm waiting; from attendre

Garde-moi une place - Save me a seat

leur quartier - their neighborhood

range sa carte - puts his card away

Le lendemain - the next day

Comprehension questions

Answer in French or English. Check the explanations on the next page when you are ready.

1. Why are so many people staying inside the café?
2. Who is Julien's card for, and what is happening tomorrow?
3. What does Nora suggest Julien write instead?
4. Did Nora and Julien know each other before this conversation?
5. What time does Nora arrive at the restaurant the next day?

Answers and explanations

1. Why are so many people staying inside the café?

Answer: It is raining outside.

Why: The opening says “Dehors, il pleut et les gens restent à l'intérieur.” The rain explains why they remain indoors.

2. Who is Julien's card for, and what is happening tomorrow?

Answer: It is for his sister, who is opening a restaurant.

Why: Julien says “C'est pour ma sœur” and “Elle ouvre un restaurant demain.” Both details are stated directly.

3. What does Nora suggest Julien write instead?

Answer: “Je viens demain. Garde-moi une place ?”

Why: Her suggestion promises a visit and asks for a seat. Julien writes it because it is better and true.

4. Did Nora and Julien know each other before this conversation?

Answer: No.

Why: They know the same bakery, but the paragraph explicitly says “ils ne se connaissent pas.” Sharing a neighborhood does not mean they have met.

5. What time does Nora arrive at the restaurant the next day?

Answer: At seven o'clock.

Why: She says “j'arrive à sept heures” and the final sentence confirms that she arrives “à sept heures, comme prévu.”

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