

Trois cartes identiques

Three neighbors receive the same old photograph of their street. A postmark gives them a way to find its sender.

Mercredi, Samira a trouvé une carte postale dans sa boîte aux lettres. Sur la photo, on voyait une rue avec une boulangerie, deux vélos et un grand arbre. Au dos, quelqu'un avait écrit : Elle a bien changé. À bientôt. Il n'y avait pas de signature.

Samira a reconnu sa rue, mais la boulangerie était maintenant une pharmacie. L'arbre avait disparu. Elle a posé la carte sur sa table et oublié le message jusqu'au soir. En rentrant, elle a rencontré Nicolas au rez-de-chaussée. Il tenait exactement la même carte. « Tu connais quelqu'un qui écrit encore ça ? » a-t-il demandé.

Le lendemain, ils ont parlé à Madame Petit, leur voisine du premier. Elle aussi avait reçu la photo. Pourtant, sur sa carte, son prénom était écrit à la main. Sur les deux autres, il y avait seulement les numéros des appartements. Samira a proposé de regarder les cartes ensemble.

Les trois cartes portaient le même cachet de la poste : Tours. Madame Petit a pris ses lunettes. « Rose habitait ici avant vous. Elle vit près de Tours maintenant. Mais pourquoi cette photo ? » Elle a cherché son numéro dans un carnet. Samira s'attendait à un appel rapide. Rose a répondu après quelques secondes.

Oui, elle avait envoyé les cartes. Elle préparait ses cartons pour quitter sa maison et avait retrouvé un paquet de vieilles photos. Son mari avait pris celle de la rue en 1989. Elle devait venir dans le quartier vendredi pour un rendez-vous. Elle voulait apporter la photo originale, plus grande, mais elle n'avait plus les numéros des nouveaux voisins.

« J'ai écrit À bientôt parce que je viens réellement bientôt, a-t-elle expliqué. J'aurais dû ajouter mon nom. J'avais six cartes sur la table et j'ai écrit trop vite. » Madame Petit a ri. « Trois sont bien arrivées, en tout cas. »

Vendredi, Rose est arrivée avec la grande photo et une boîte de biscuits. Les voisins l'ont regardée autour de la table de Samira. Ils ont retrouvé la fenêtre de chaque appartement. Rose a donné la photo à l'immeuble. Nicolas a proposé de la mettre dans l'entrée. Samira a écrit au dos le nom du photographe et la date. Nicolas a mesuré la photo pour acheter un cadre le lendemain.

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Three Identical Postcards

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

On Wednesday, Samira found a postcard in her mailbox. In the photograph, you could see a street with a bakery, two bicycles and a large tree. On the back, someone had written: It has really changed. See you soon. There was no signature.

Samira recognized her street, but the bakery was now a pharmacy. The tree had disappeared. She put the card on her table and forgot the message until the evening. When she came home, she met Nicolas on the ground floor. He was holding exactly the same card. "Do you know anyone who still writes that?" he asked.

The next day, they spoke to Madame Petit, their neighbor on the first floor. She too had received the photograph. However, on her card, her first name was written by hand. On the other two, there were only the apartment numbers. Samira suggested looking at the cards together.

The three cards carried the same postmark: Tours. Madame Petit picked up her glasses. "Rose lived here before you. She lives near Tours now. But why this photograph?" She looked for her number in a notebook. Samira expected a quick call. Rose answered after a few seconds.

Yes, she had sent the cards. She was packing her boxes to leave her house and had found a bundle of old photographs. Her husband had taken the one of the street in 1989. She was due to come to the neighborhood on Friday for an appointment. She wanted to bring the larger original photograph, but she no longer had the new neighbors' numbers.

"I wrote See you soon because I really am coming soon," she explained. "I should have added my name. I had six cards on the table and wrote too quickly." Madame Petit laughed. "Three have arrived safely, anyway."

On Friday, Rose arrived with the large photograph and a box of biscuits. The neighbors looked at it around Samira's table. They found the window of each apartment. Rose gave the photograph to the building. Nicolas suggested putting it in the entrance hall. Samira wrote the photographer's name and the date on the back. Nicolas measured the photograph so he could buy a frame the next day.

Vocabulary in this story

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

boîte aux lettres - mailbox or letterbox

Au dos - on the back, here of the postcard

rez-de-chaussée - ground floor

écrit à la main - written by hand

cachet de la poste - postmark

s'attendait à - expected; from s'attendre à

J'aurais dû - I should have

un cadre - a frame, here for a photograph

Comprehension questions

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

1. Which two things in the old photograph have changed?
2. How is Madame Petit's postcard different from the other two?
3. What clue suggests that Madame Petit should call Rose?
4. Why did Rose write "À bientôt"?
5. Does the story explain what happened to the other three postcards on Rose's table?

Answers and explanations

1. Which two things in the old photograph have changed?

Answer: The bakery has become a pharmacy, and the tree has disappeared.

Why: The second paragraph compares the photograph with the street now: “la boulangerie était maintenant une pharmacie” and “L'arbre avait disparu.”

2. How is Madame Petit's postcard different from the other two?

Answer: Her first name is handwritten on it; the other cards have only apartment numbers.

Why: The third paragraph gives this visible clue. It does not say Madame Petit's picture is different.

3. What clue suggests that Madame Petit should call Rose?

Answer: All three cards have a Tours postmark, and Rose now lives near Tours.

Why: The postmark and Madame Petit's knowledge of the former neighbor connect the cards to a possible sender. The phone call then confirms it.

4. Why did Rose write “À bientôt”?

Answer: She really was coming to the neighborhood soon, on Friday for an appointment.

Why: Rose explicitly explains that the phrase referred to her forthcoming visit. It was not a secret code.

5. Does the story explain what happened to the other three postcards on Rose's table?

Answer: No.

Why: Rose mentions six cards, and Madame Petit says three arrived safely. The text never identifies the recipients or fate of the others.

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