

The Bar: Speed, Memory and Conversation

My minute and a half: second one, eye contact with the newcomer — “I see you, I’m coming” without words; he’s no longer invisible, and someone who feels seen will wait twice as long. Seconds two to forty: the dining room order, first — it’s the most overdue, and it’s a guest who can’t speak up for themselves because you can’t see them; the server waiting for it has a table watching him. It gets made while I tell the regulars with a half smile: “Don’t go anywhere, I’ll be right back with you.” The regulars understand — they’re regulars precisely because they know the house.

Seconds forty to eighty: the newcomer. Full greeting, order, and if his drink is quick, it goes out right away; a bar’s first impression is decided with the first drink. And the close of the minute and a half: back with the regulars, picking up the chat where it left off — memory is also remembering the conversation.

The pattern: priority isn’t set by how loud someone’s voice is or how long they’ve been coming — it’s set by who has gone unattended the longest and who can’t speak up. And the whole juggling act is done without losing the friendly face: at the bar, your face is the menu everyone reads.