Vera Ginzbourg

[00:00]

Veronika: So, how long have you been coming here?

Vera: Um... honestly? A long time. Like... six years? Seven years? Something like that. Long enough that I don't really remember the first time.

[00:32]

Veronika: What made you come in the first place?

Vera: I think I was just walking by. I saw people sitting outside and it looked nice. And then I got a pastry. I don't remember which one.

(Laughs)

Vera: Obviously it worked because I'm still here.

[01:10]

Veronika: Why do you keep coming back?

Vera: Umm... that's actually a good question. The pastries are great, obviously. But I don't think that's the main reason anymore.

Veronika: What's the main reason?

Vera: The feeling. Which sounds cheesy.

(Laughs)

Vera: But it's true.

[02:05]

Veronika: What do you mean by the feeling?

Vera: Like... nobody's rushing you. You can sit here for two hours and nobody cares. People read. They talk. Sometimes I'll just sit here with coffee and stare into space.

Veronika: Really?

Vera: Yeah. Silicon Valley doesn't have a lot of places that encourage that.

[03:18]

Veronika: What makes this place different from Starbucks or somewhere like that?

Vera: Umm... okay, so Starbucks feels like a transaction.

Veronika: What do you mean?

Vera: You go in. You get your drink. Maybe you work. Then you leave. Here it feels more... personal, I guess.

[04:11]

Veronika: Personal how?

Vera: The staff actually know people.

Veronika: Like regular customers?

Vera: Yeah. Eli especially.

Veronika: What about him?

Vera: He notices people. Like if somebody hasn't been here in a while he'll ask where they've been. He remembers what people order. He remembers little things.

[05:25]

Veronika: Does that matter?

Vera: I think so.

(Pause)

Vera: Actually, I think it matters more than people realize.

[06:02]

Veronika: How come?

Vera: Because everybody's lonely.

(Pause)

Vera: I mean, maybe that's too dramatic.

(Laughs)

Vera: But seriously, people spend so much time online and working and rushing around. Having a place where somebody recognizes you is kind of a big deal.

[07:16]

Veronika: Do you think the French culture part is important?

Vera: Yeah, definitely.

Veronika: Why?

Vera: It's not just the pastries.

Veronika: Then what is it?

Vera: It's the pace. The atmosphere. Like if you've ever been to Europe, people sit around for hours. Nobody's trying to maximize productivity every second.

[08:35]

Veronika: So you feel that here?

Vera: Yeah.

(Pause)

Vera: Maybe not exactly like France. We're still in Mountain View.

(Laughs)

Vera: But you can feel where the inspiration comes from.

[09:18]

Veronika: Do you think immigrant-owned businesses are important?

Vera: Absolutely.

Veronika: Why?

Vera: Because otherwise every city starts looking the same.

[10:02]

Veronika: Can you explain that?

Vera: Um... if every place is a chain, every downtown becomes interchangeable. You don't know if you're in California or Texas or Arizona.

Veronika: That's interesting.

Vera: Immigrant-owned businesses bring pieces of other cultures with them. Food, traditions, ways of interacting with people.

[11:15]

Veronika: Do you think Maison Alyzée does that?

Vera: Yeah. One hundred percent.

[11:40]

Veronika: If somebody had never been here before, what would you tell them?

Vera: I'd tell them to get a coffee, sit outside, and don't rush.

Veronika: That's it?

Vera: That's it.

Vera: The whole point of the place is that you don't have to be in a hurry.

In Vera's interview, I highlighted a lot of places where she brought up the difference in business culture at Maison Alyzee versus other similar coffee shops. She focused on how the culture created by Eli helps customers feel welcomed and incredibly at-home, enticing them to come in more and allowing them to truly enjoy their time and want to come back. This filled in some of the gaps in my research, where it was previously unclear what exactly set Maison Alyzee apart from other coffee shops, or why it was such a pillar of the community. Additionally, I touched on how Maison Alyzee is so vital to the community from a cultural perspective, as being an immigrant-founded small business contributes to both the atmosphere and the products. Vera's second interview proves the importance of immigrant business within American culture, and their effects on consumers. I would still like to have a second interviewee to truly reaffirm my claim, as a second perspective could really elevate the story.