

The Banquet's Empty Seat

GM reference | 120 minutes | Edition 2.0.0

At a glance

Draw five adjacent chair boxes numbered 1 through 5 from the serving door to the window. Put movable name slips for Daro, Ilen, Omi, Nessa, and CREW beside them. The room survey says the chime is audible at 1-2, the centerpiece is at 3, and useful daylight reaches only 5. Reply slips say Nessa needs daylight; Daro needs an end seat away from the centerpiece; Ilen needs the chime; Omi must sit beside Ilen and cannot take the door chair. Therefore Nessa takes 5, Daro takes 1, Ilen takes 2, Omi takes 3, leaving 4 for the crew. The authorizing memo plus Pem's lift record establish why the fifth setting exists and why cards moved; neither implies a snub. Have players explain one dependency each rather than guessing a complete permutation. A plausible equivalent accommodation, such as moving the drawing lamp, should use the quiet-meal ending with an explicit change, not silently rewrite the fixed room evidence.

Truth

A spilled jug made steward Pem lift the place cards without preserving their order. The fifth setting was always a rotating meal place for the delivery crew, not an omitted guest. The room's fixed features and the guests' reply slips yield one workable arrangement: Daro at 1, Ilen at 2, Omi at 3, the crew place at 4, and Nessa at 5. Publicly correcting the preparation record restores a formal supper; seating by practical needs without speeches makes a quieter meal while the record waits.

120-minute route

10m opening; Hear requests and map the room 25m; Investigate the fifth setting and spill 25m; Test the arrangement with the guests 30m; Write a welcome the evidence supports 20m; 10m closure.

Give each player one requirement to defend and one record to question. The longer game allows a witnessed re-survey or an accommodation redesign, while a quiet meal remains preferable if the guests do not want a public explanation.

People

Ilen: Hear the chime without interrupting every course. Offers: A clear seating request and help checking adjacency. Boundary: A promise to shout later is not the requested quiet accommodation.

Omi: Sit beside Ilen away from the busy doorway. Offers: Movable name slips and a patient restatement of all requests. Boundary: Will not take chair 1 just to make the arrangement look tidy.

Nessa: Work where the remaining daylight reaches. Offers: A drawing that documents the agreed setting. Boundary: Needs actual light, not a ceremonial

window-facing title.

Pem: Correct the spill's consequences and keep crew meals visible. Offers: The wet runner, preparation memo, and a quiet-meal alternative. Boundary: Will not pretend the crew place belongs to an invented absent guest.

Events

Table-setting intervals at most 1: Pem asks whether to serve the verified arrangement, begin quietly, or switch to flexible service. The soup can wait for that decision.

Closures

A place prepared for each need: All four needs accommodated is true and Preparation record corrected is true

Good soup before good speeches: All four needs accommodated is true

The supper leaves its seating plan: Available

Recovery

At the window recess, re-survey costs two intervals and recovers missing observational knowledge with direct witnesses. If no consistent fixed plan is available, shared-service changes the meal format openly, reserves crew food, and leaves the banquet arrangement unresolved.