

## The Well-Made Workshop

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Yanis was eleven years old and had an impressive collection of 'almosts'. Almost good at sports. Almost top of the spelling test. Almost funny when he told jokes. He was the one people liked, but didn't applaud.

And little by little, he had started to believe that nothing in him really shone. He constantly compared himself to his sister, to his friends, to others. All he could see in himself was a vague but heavy 'not enough'.

One day, a workshop opened at school: a place to tinker, garden, repair, and create. Yanis went, not expecting much. He sat at an empty table until an instructor invited him to fix a lamp. He focused, changed the bulb, cleaned the switch, and... the lamp turned on. A quiet warmth rose in him: he had been useful.

In the weeks that followed, he came back. He repaired a stool, built a planter box, made friends with Théo and Aïcha. He discovered the joy of doing things together, without competition, without spotlights.

Then a challenge was announced: build something useful for the school. Yanis proposed a sheltered bench, a calm corner to read or rest. His idea was chosen. He became team leader. A new feeling took hold: being listened to.

But soon, another project became the students' favourite: a large mural with coloured mirrors and a catchy slogan. It was more visual, more 'wow'. Some even said the bench was 'too simple', 'too plain'. Yanis heard those words like tiny stings under his skin. He began to wonder if he'd been wrong.

For a while, he thought about quitting. He stayed home one Wednesday, claiming a headache. He felt like he was back to being 'almost'. Almost useful. Almost chosen.

But Théo came to his door with a folded sketch.

We miss you. We don't know how to put the seat together. You're the one who knows.

Yanis hesitated. Then he grabbed his coat.

He returned to the workshop. He found the wood, the tools, the smell of sawdust. He guided his team with calm confidence. He understood that what he was making might not have the dazzle of a mural, but it lasted. It served a purpose.

On the day of the unveiling, the headteacher thanked all the participants. The bench was placed under a tree. A small sign was fixed to it: 'Pause Bench – here, you can just be.'

When Yanis sat down on it, he no longer felt the need to shine. He knew he belonged.

A month later, a talent fair was organised. Yanis set up a workshop corner: repaired objects, his grandfather's tools, a miniature shelf, and a little sign: 'Here, we repair, adjust, and learn.'

His stand had no music or flashy colours. But it drew in the curious. Yanis explained, invited others to try, calmly showed how things worked.

A little girl spent a long time turning a bolt under his supervision. A teenager asked how to straighten a rod. An adult leaned in and said: "You have a real gift."

Yanis didn't reply. But a smile rose up to his shoulders. It was the feeling of existing in his own way.

A few days later, they were asked to write down three personal strengths. Yanis picked up his pencil and wrote: reliable, observant, meticulous. Not spectacular words, but ones that felt like him.

When the teacher asked him to explain, he spoke about the bench. The fair. The first lamp. He didn't try to impress. He placed his words like you place a screw where it belongs.

His classmates listened. And Yanis understood that you can be quiet and important. Discreet and capable. And that some talents are measured in actions, not volume.