

Episode 4



This one's on me!

Hello, I'm Richard Winterbottom.

Welcome to Season Two, Episode Four of Rick's Bite-Sized English.

Each week we examine a word or phrase that you can take away to try to build your English and your confidence.

There's a new episode every week, so make sure you follow so you don't miss out.

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Karl drained the last of his glass, pushed his chair back and signalled for the bill.

It was more than usual, quite steep really, but he could easily afford it. And anyway, he only had himself to pay for.

Karl was overweight and perspiring. He stood up, not without a little difficulty. Maybe he should think about that gym membership. Except he didn't have any time.

Now, as most evenings, he needed to go back to his office. He had a couple of contracts he wanted to look over, but he promised himself he'd be home by ten o'clock, not that he had much to do once he did get home.

The restaurant was refined, the food exquisite and the service flawless. For nearly fifteen years, Karl had dined here almost daily, except when business took him away, which it often did.



‘Table for two for Friday evening, André’, he said on the way out. The waiter looked puzzled. Karl almost never brought company. When he had a business meal he preferred to go to the other side of town, this was his private place, or so he liked to think.

But tomorrow was special. He was meeting Adrian. They'd been best friends when they were twelve

years old, but hadn't seen each other since school. Now that Karl had made his first millions he owed it to Adrian to buy him the meal they had bet on. And he was looking forward to telling Adrian about his success, the booming business, the villa in southern Spain, his penthouse suite across from his office, the car. What would Adrian's life be like? Not half as good, he was sure.

Adrian was not used to such opulence. He had left school at 16, done a short course at a training college and now worked at the local printers. He didn't often go to restaurants, but on special occasions he and his wife Jenny liked to go to the local hamburger joint with their two small children. Cheap and cheerful, as they say!

Maison Bruce, eh? He knew it was rather fancy and he wasn't sure what he would order. Perhaps Karl would order for both of them.

Friday evening arrived.

"So, here we are after all these years. You remember our bet, don't you?"

Adrian smiled "Of course I do, Karl. You always said you'd make a million before you were thirty."

Karl grinned: “Yes, and that was our bet, so I’m buying dinner tonight.”

Karl asked about Adrian’s life. He told him about his steady job at Coopers, nothing flash, but steady, and his children Chloë, now nine, and Simon aged six. Adrian went on to explain about Chloë’s dance classes and Simon’s current obsession with dinosaurs.

Karl was taken aback by Adrian’s contentment. He hadn’t expected that, he’d thought Adrian would have been a little in awe of him and envious of his success.

‘You got kids, Karl?’

‘No, just work for me - keeps me very busy.’

Adrian thanked him for the dinner. He’d quite enjoyed it, although it wasn’t the sort of food he was used to, the wine had been quite heavy and Karl had changed rather a lot since their days at school.

As Karl paid the bill, Adrian had left to get back in time to read a bedtime story to his kids, he wondered about the contrast in their lives. Adrian had seemed so content, yet he had such a simple life, hadn’t really achieved anything.

And he thought about what he had got: the empty flat awaiting him across the road, the villa in Spain he went to alone, his flash car. What did his success amount to?

Standing on the pavement outside the restaurant, he thought about what to do next. Adrian would be at home, cosy with his wife and kids. He could just go home, watch a film maybe. Or he could get in his car and drive somewhere, anywhere. Those contracts could wait, they didn't need looking at tonight.

But none of those options appealed. 'I'll be on my own anyway', he thought. 'I might as well go up to the office', and he crossed the street and went in to the empty building.

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After Adrian has left, Karl thinks about the limited options he has for the evening. He concludes by saying he might as well go back to his office to look over some contracts.

Why does he use the phrase 'might as well'. We use this phrase to say one alternative or course of action seems reasonable, especially if none of the alternatives are better.

Sometimes it suggests the idea that nothing will improve the outcome, so there is a sense of inevitability.

The phrase is followed by a verb in the bare infinitive might as well plus verb, eg we might as well leave, you might as well go home.

In some situations it could be seen as quite informal, for example in a work situation it could be seen as too casual or uninterested.

Let me know how you will use this language by leaving a rating and review wherever you listen to the podcast.

I'd love to hear from you.

Thanks for listening.

See you next week.