A Prize on the Mountain (B1 · English B1)

Tekst / Transcript

The school announced a summer challenge for every class: to climb the hill behind the town and plant a tree at the top. The winning class would get a prize at the end-of-year ceremony. Most students groaned, but Marco was excited. He had never reached the top, although he had tried twice with his father.

His class met on Saturday morning in the central square, right in the center of town. Their teacher, Mrs Ferri, carried a heavy bag with water and a small chain to fasten the young tree to a post. She made one rule very clear: nobody should walk alone, and nobody should cheat by taking a car up the back road. Two boys laughed, because that was exactly their plan. Mrs Ferri looked at them and they stopped laughing.

The path was steep and dusty. Marco's shoes were cheap, and after an hour the left one began to open at the toe. He tied it with string and kept going. Halfway up, the group stopped to eat and to collect the waste that other visitors had left on the grass. Mrs Ferri said that a mountain was not a rubbish bin. Someone read a funny chapter from a book about a lazy explorer, and everybody rested for twenty minutes.

They reached the top just after two o'clock. The view was wide and quiet, and the whole town looked like a toy under them. They dug a hole together and planted the little tree. Marco poured the last of his water on the roots. Then Mrs Ferri took a photograph of everyone around it.

At the celebration in June, the class received a certificate and a box of fruit. The head teacher joked that the school's contract with the mountain now had a new clause: each year, one more tree. Marco kept the photograph in his room. His broken shoe went into the bin, but he never thought of that day as a ___ of time.

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