The Quiet Watchers (B2 · English B2)

Tekst / Transcript

The bird station stood on a low hill above the marsh, and every autumn a small team arrived to count the birds passing through. Mira had worked there for three seasons, and she still enjoyed the first cold mornings. Her job was to observe the sky from six o'clock until noon, writing down every flock she saw. It sounded simple, but it demanded patience that most visitors did not expect. By the end of a shift, her notebook was full of numbers, arrows and short comments.

That year the team had a new colleague, a young volunteer named Daniel. On his first day he asked whether the counting really needed to be so precise. Mira explained that the accuracy of the data mattered more than the speed of the work, because researchers across Europe would use their numbers. If one station counted carelessly, the whole picture became unreliable. Daniel listened, and after that he wrote every figure down twice.

They worked from a wooden platform with two chairs and a shared telescope. Mira told him that a good observer never guesses, and that an honest empty column is better than an invented total. Daniel found this difficult at first. He wanted to see rare birds, and he sometimes reported one before he was certain. When Mira asked him to describe the wings again, he usually admitted that he had not looked long enough.

By the third week his notes had become genuinely accurate, and Mira told him so. He had learned to wait, to check the light, and to compare what he saw with the pictures in his old guidebook. One morning he made a careful observation that changed their routine: the largest flocks always appeared about twenty minutes after the wind dropped. Nobody at the station had written that down before, though several people had noticed something similar. Mira suggested that he treat the idea as a proper hypothesis and test it over the rest of the season.

So Daniel began recording wind speed as well, always at the same moments so that he could compare days accurately. The station manager, who visited every Friday, agreed to assess his results at the end of October. She warned him that one season of data proves very little. Even so, she liked the question, and she promised to include his tables in the annual report. Her only criterion was that the measurements had to be taken in exactly the same way each day.

The final assessment took place in a warm office in the village, with coffee and far too many printed pages. The manager read everything slowly before she gave her evaluation, which was cautious but encouraging. The pattern was visible, she said, although the sample of days was still too small to be certain. Daniel was not disappointed; he already knew that he would return the following autumn. As he packed the telescope away, he realised that patience, not sharp eyes, had been the real lesson of the season.

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