The Lights Above the Lake (B2 · English B2)

Tekst / Transcript

Every autumn, for as long as anyone in the village could remember, pale lights appeared above the lake shortly after midnight. Tourists came with cameras. Scientists came with instruments. Nobody left with a satisfying explanation, and the phenomenon had gradually become the village's main source of income.

Dr Halvard arrived in October with one clear objective: to record the lights properly for the first time. She was not interested in ghost stories or in the newspaper articles that appeared every year. She set up four cameras along the shore and a small weather station on the hill. Her funding was modest, and she knew that the costs would soon exceed what the university had agreed to pay. She rented a room above the bakery and worked alone.

The villagers were polite but doubtful. An old fisherman named Otto told her that the lights had been there before the road, before the church, before even the oldest house. He rejected the notion that anything so beautiful could be explained by gas or electricity. Dr Halvard did not argue with him. From her perspective, the argument itself was less interesting than the data, and she suspected that Otto enjoyed the mystery too much to want it solved. They shared coffee most mornings and disagreed pleasantly.

The weather that month was extreme: freezing nights followed by unusually warm afternoons. On the eleventh night, the cameras finally caught something clear. Watching the recording frame by frame, Dr Halvard could distinguish two separate kinds of light: a steady glow near the water and quick flickers much higher up. Essentially, she was looking at two phenomena that everyone had always described as one. That single observation changed the whole investigation.

By November she had a theory. The lower glow came from gas released by rotting plants under the lake, while the flickers were reflections of something far away in the atmosphere. She wrote her report carefully and sent it off. It was a strange existence , she thought, spending her nights beside a black lake in order to prove that magic was chemistry. When the article was published, the village argued about it for weeks. To her surprise, tourist numbers rose. Otto shook his head and said the scientists had explained the lights without explaining anything at all. A contemporary artist from the city painted the lake in bright greens and sold the picture for a fortune. Dr Halvard bought a small print of it and hung it in her office, next to the graph that had made her famous.

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