A Sunday at the Cabin (B2 · English B2)

Tekst / Transcript

The cabin had not been used since the previous autumn, and it showed. When Marek pushed the door open, a cloud of dust rose into the sunlight and made his sister sneeze. Leaves had blown in under the door during the winter storms. "Somebody will have to sweep this floor before we do anything else," Iris said, pulling off her coat. Marek pretended not to hear her and walked straight towards the kitchen.

They had come for a single weekend, mainly to prepare the place for their parents' visit in July. The list of jobs was long. Marek carried in the bags while Iris opened every window she could reach. In the bedroom she found a mirror with a long crack running from corner to corner, and she wrapped it in an old towel so that nobody would cut themselves. Outside, the grass had grown almost as high as the fence.

After lunch they divided the work. Iris took the axe and went to chop firewood behind the shed, working steadily until her arms ached. Marek stayed inside to rub the layer of grease off the kitchen window with vinegar and a cloth, which took far longer than he had expected. Every twenty minutes one of them shouted something through the open window, usually a complaint. By four o'clock the pile of logs was impressive and the glass was almost clear.

The hardest task was the mattress in the back room, which had become damp and smelt terrible. Together they had to drag it down the narrow corridor and out onto the grass, stopping twice to change their grip. They decided to dump it at the recycling centre on the way home rather than leave it to rot. Marek's hands were black afterwards, so he went down to the lake to wash them. On the way he stopped to watch a family of ducks floating calmly near the reeds, as if nothing in the world needed doing.

In the evening they lit the stove and ate soup out of chipped bowls. Iris had brought a small cake for their mother's birthday, and she asked Marek to wrap it in paper before they forgot. He was hopeless at it, and the result looked more like a parcel of laundry than a gift. Then he tried to crack a walnut with the back of a spoon and sent it flying across the table. Iris managed to catch it in mid-air, which she said was the finest achievement of her entire weekend. They laughed for a long time about that.

Before bed, Marek went out to hold the last of the logs by the door in case it rained. Iris stayed inside and folded blankets. She realised, half asleep, that they had handled two days of hard work without a single argument, which had certainly not been true when they were younger. In the morning they would grab their bags, lock the door and drive back to the city, leaving the cabin warm, clean and finally ready.

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