A Season at the Market Stall (B2 · English B2)

Tekst / Transcript

Tomas had never intended to sell vegetables. He had studied history, and in his final year he had written a comparative study of two farming villages, one in the north and one in the south. When his grandmother fell ill, however, he took over her stall in the covered market, and the thesis stayed in a drawer. The first winter was severe, with frost on the crates every morning and almost no customers before ten o'clock.

The other traders watched him with amusement. They had all inherited their positions, and there was an unspoken rank among them, based on how many years a family had held the same corner. Tomas came last. His neighbour Marta, who sold cheese and had done so for thirty years, decided to take pity on him. She explained which suppliers were honest, which deliveries arrived late, and why the so-called organic vegetables in the shop across the road were nothing of the kind. He listened carefully and wrote everything down, which she found ridiculous funny.

Business improved relatively slowly at first. Then, in April, a food blogger wrote about the market, and the number of visitors grew rapidly. Tomas sold out by noon three days in a row. Prices at the wholesale depot rose somewhat at the same time, which struck him as ridiculous, since the crops had been excellent that spring. He complained loudly and got nowhere. Somehow, between long hours and short nights, he managed to keep his own prices stable, and his regular customers noticed.

By midsummer he was selling roughly four times as much as in January. He added a small table where people could taste raw carrots, radishes and peas straight from the crate, and children dragged their parents over to try them. The rapid growth of the stall meant he had to hire a student to help at weekends. Marta said he had been lucky. Tomas privately agreed, though he also knew that luck rarely visits people who sleep late.

Then August brought a severe storm. The roof of the market leaked, the electricity failed, and two stalls near the entrance were severely damaged. Tomas spent the night carrying crates to higher ground. In the morning, standing in the wet hall with Marta and the others, he realised that his history degree had suddenly become relevant again: he was, after all, watching a small community decide how to rebuild something. He started keeping notes for a book that evening, and he has kept a steady record ever since.

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