The Lights Above Ravensfield (B2 · English B2)

Tekst / Transcript

Ravensfield had been a mining town for two hundred years, and although the last pit had closed long before I was born, the place still remembered it. My grandfather had been a miner, and his photograph hung above the fireplace, his face black with dust and his teeth surprisingly white. Every autumn the town held a service beside the stone monument in the square, where the names of the men lost underground were carved in three long columns.

The strange business began in October. People started reporting lights above the old hills: pale, slow-moving points that appeared just after dark and vanished before midnight. Opinions in the town were mixed. Some said aircraft, some said weather, and a few of the older residents said things they preferred not to repeat in daylight. My neighbour Ellis, who had served in the military for twenty years and was not easily impressed, admitted that he could not explain them. Moreover, he told me, he had watched them through binoculars on three separate nights and taken notes each time.

Ellis was a practical man with a workshop full of tools. He decided to mount a camera on the roof of his shed, angled towards the hills, and he wired it to an old motor so that it could turn slowly from left to right. The whole arrangement looked ridiculous, but it worked. He also persuaded the parish council to fund the project at their monthly meeting, arguing that curiosity was cheaper than fear. Within a fortnight, rumours had begun to multiply across the county, and journalists were phoning the village shop.

By November, the story had grown into something much larger than the lights themselves. A magazine described Ravensfield as a town haunted by a monster from the mines, which struck most of us as a nasty way to talk about our grandfathers. Ellis was furious. He printed the photographs, built a small model of the valley out of cardboard to show the exact angles, and invited the reporters to look at the evidence properly. Nobody came. He kept working anyway, treating it as a personal mission, and I helped him most evenings after school.

The answer, when it arrived, was disappointingly ordinary. A research team had been testing lighting equipment from a site behind the ridge, and their permits had simply never been published locally. Ellis laughed for a long time when he read the letter. Still, something good had come out of it: the whole town had spent six weeks looking upwards together, arguing in the pub and lending each other binoculars. At the service that year, an old woman read a poem her father had written underground, and it was the most moving thing I have ever heard in that square. The mysterious lights had gone, but the town felt oddly warmer without them.

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