The Night Before the Festival (B2 · English B2)

Tekst / Transcript

Marta had promised the town council that the harbour would be ready by Saturday morning. The deadline was fixed, printed on posters all over town, and there was no way to move it. She had been given a small budget, a rusty boat and a list of volunteers who rarely appeared. Still, she had accepted the job, because nobody else had wanted it.

The main task was to decorate the old fishing boat that would carry the festival lanterns across the bay. Marta had spent three evenings painting its wooden deck a deep blue, and her hands still smelled of varnish. Every decoration she hung from the mast had been sewn by the women of the sailing club. It wasn't perfect work, but it looked warm and honest under the lights.

Her main problem was money. Ticket sales had continued to decrease for the third year running, and the council had refused to increase her budget. A local antiques dealer had offered to lend her a hundred lamps for free, provided she returned them undamaged. Marta had almost declined his offer out of pride, then realised how foolish that would be. In the end she thanked him twice and borrowed a van to collect everything.

On Friday afternoon a storm arrived from the west and caused a long delay . The volunteers sat in the harbour café, watching rain hammer the windows, and nobody dared to go outside. Marta drank three cups of coffee and studied the sky. By seven the wind had dropped, and the clouds began to break apart above the water. She was deeply relieved, though she tried not to show it in front of the others.

They worked until the harbour was swallowed by darkness , hanging lamps by torchlight and tying knots with cold fingers. The result was not professional, but it was decent enough to make people stop on the bridge and stare. When the first lantern was lit at midnight, an old fisherman told Marta that the bay had not looked so beautiful in twenty years. She went home soaked, exhausted and quietly proud of every single lamp.

Try our 6-step method for free and make these words stick.

Listen to this episode online: https://course.interactivelessons.nl/local/podcast/episode.php?id=25320

Start this course for free: https://course.interactivelessons.nl/mod/quiz/view.php?id=1720