What the Sand Kept (B2 · English B2)

Tekst / Transcript

The team had been working in the desert for six weeks, and the heat had worn everyone down. They rose before sunrise, ate quickly and drove out to the site while the air was still cool. Dr Okafor, who led the excavation, insisted that they dig slowly and record everything they found. Speed, she said, destroys more history than any storm ever has.

Her students often complained about the pace. They wanted results, photographs and something impressive to show the university. Instead, they filled notebook after notebook with detailed drawings of broken pottery. Every measurement had to be checked twice, and no one was allowed to delete a single line from the records, even when it seemed useless. Okafor had once lost a whole season's data to an impatient assistant, and she had never forgotten it.

In the fourth week the instruments began to detect something unusual beneath a low ridge. The signal was faint but regular, which suggested walls rather than natural rock. Okafor did not tell the students immediately; her silence was entirely deliberate , because she wanted them to reach the same conclusion themselves. Two days later a young woman named Selin came to her with a careful sketch and a theory. Okafor smiled for the first time in weeks.

The depth of the buried structure surprised them all. They had expected a shallow floor, but the stones continued down more than four metres. Word spread quickly, and a television crew demanded permission to film inside the trench. Okafor refused, explaining that the walls were fragile and that a camera team would ruin months of work. When the journalists complained loudly outside the camp gate, their small demonstration attracted more attention than the discovery itself.

Work continued anyway. Selin later wrote that the name of the site probably derived from an old word meaning "place of water", which made sense, since the ridge had once stood beside a river. Okafor kept every detail of that argument in the final report, including the parts she disagreed with. She had deliberately built the project around patience, and patience had rewarded her. On the last evening the team sat on the sand, too tired to talk, watching the light disappear behind the dunes.

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