The Night of the Falling Star (B2 · English B2)

Tekst / Transcript

Nobody in the village had expected anything unusual that evening. The harvest was finished, the air smelled of smoke, and most families were already sitting around their kitchen tables. Then, just after nine o'clock, the sky above the eastern hills turned a strange silver colour. A boy who had been carrying wood to the shed was the first to see it, and he ran back to the house without saying a word.

His mother, Elena, followed him outside and stopped in the middle of the yard. The light was stunning, far brighter than the moon, and it moved slowly across the clouds. She did not shout, and she did not cry; she simply stood there with the wood still in her arms. The dog began to bark. Somewhere down the lane, a woman started to scream so loudly that windows opened all along the street. It was the kind of sound that turns fear into something contagious.

Within minutes half the village had gathered at the crossroads. People pointed, argued, and repeated the same three questions to each other. An old farmer named Tomas pushed to the front, leaning on his stick. He had lived through a war and two floods, and he was not easily impressed. Even so, he began to stare at the sky as though he had forgotten how to blink. "I have never seen anything like it," he said quietly, and the crowd went silent because Tomas rarely spoke at all.

The light faded after twenty minutes, leaving behind a thin trail of cloud. Coffee was made, and somebody brought out a bottle of something strong. The taste was bitter, but nobody complained on a night like that. Children who should have been in bed sat on the wall, swinging their legs, remarkably awake despite the hour. Elena noticed how dynamic the group had become: neighbours who had not spoken since the summer argument were now standing shoulder to shoulder, sharing theories. One young man, an engineering student home for the holidays, was capable of explaining most of what they had seen, and he did so patiently, drawing diagrams in the dust with a stick.

Still, explanations only satisfied some of them. Tomas leaned towards Elena and began to whisper, so that the students would not hear him. He said the sky had shown him something similar sixty years earlier, on the night his brother was born. His face was striking in the lamplight, all deep lines and steady eyes, and Elena thought she would remember it for the rest of her life. She was too curious to let the story end there, so she asked him to continue.

They talked until well past midnight. What was truly remarkable was not the light itself, but the way it had pulled an entire village out of its houses and into one conversation. In the morning the newspapers offered a dull scientific explanation, and most people accepted it with a shrug. Elena kept her own version, however, and years later her son would tell it to his own children, always adding a detail or two of his own.

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