The Night Shift at Platform Six (B2 · English B2)

Tekst / Transcript

Nobody at the station expected anything unusual that Tuesday. The last train had gone, the shops were closed, and only two people remained on platform six: Marcus, a young guard on his first night shift, and an elderly woman who had missed her connection. Marcus was tired, and he was quietly counting the minutes until he could go home.

Then the lights went out. For a moment there was complete darkness, and Marcus felt a wave of panic rise in his chest, sharp and cold. He reminded himself that the emergency generator usually started within a minute, but the silence made him doubt it. The woman, however, simply opened her handbag and took out a small torch. "Modern buildings," she said calmly, "are far less reliable than my old kitchen." Marcus laughed, and found her comment unexpectedly amusing in such a strange moment.

The generator did start, though it took almost four minutes. In that time the two of them talked more than most strangers do in a year. She told him that she had once worked as a train driver, which he found completely astonishing, because he had never met a woman of her generation in that job. She described drivers who used to scare new recruits with stories about ghosts in the tunnels. Marcus admitted that such stories would probably still terrify him today.

When the lights returned, a man in a dark coat was standing at the far end of the platform, and neither of them had heard him arrive. He walked towards them quickly, shouting that the exit doors were locked. His voice was so aggressive that Marcus instinctively stepped in front of the old woman. It turned out, however, that the man was simply frightened himself; he had been sleeping in the waiting room and had woken up alone in the dark. His shock had made him sound far angrier than he actually felt.

Marcus unlocked the side gate and explained the situation. The man's face changed at once. He offered a short but sincere apology for his shouting, and admitted that being trapped in an empty station had genuinely shocked him. The old woman, who had watched all of this without saying a word, told him not to worry. She said she had seen far more shocking things during her years on the railways, including a cow standing peacefully in the middle of the track at dawn.

Afterwards Marcus wrote a short report, as the rules required. He described the power failure, the locked doors and the passengers, but he did not mention how close he had come to running away. It hurt his pride a little to remember it. Still, when he handed over his keys the next morning, he felt a quiet joy that surprised him: he had stayed, he had helped, and nobody had been anger at all. His manager read the report, nodded, and said that the night shift always taught people something about themselves.

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