The Map in the Attic (B2 · English B2)

Tekst / Transcript

When my grandmother died, we found an old wooden box in her attic, hidden under a pile of blankets. Inside there was a hand-drawn map, a rusty key and a photograph of a young woman standing beside a river. My sister and I stared at it for a long time. Curiosity has always been a family trait, and by the end of that afternoon we had decided to follow the map wherever it led.

The journey turned out to be a two-day trip into the northern hills, along roads that grew narrower with every kilometre. We slept in the car, ate cold sandwiches and argued about directions. On the second morning we found a forgotten railway track that matched a line on the map exactly, and our excitement returned. My sister hummed the same cheerful tune for an hour, which nearly drove me mad. Somewhere near the top of the valley, we saw a stone marker with a symbol carved into it.

An old man in the nearest village explained that his grandparents had belonged to a small tribe that had once farmed this whole area. He spoke slowly, choosing his words with care. He told us that many families had left after a terrible tragedy in 1931, when a flood destroyed the lower fields and drowned eleven people in a single night. His own great-uncle had died in that tragic accident, trying to save a neighbour's cattle. Then he offered us coffee with a strange, smoky flavor that I have never tasted anywhere else.

He warned us, however, not to look for buried treasure in the hills, because dozens of visitors had wasted years on the same dream. Some had even fallen into an abandoned mine shaft that worked like a natural trap. We promised to be careful. He clearly did not trust us, but he drew a small correction on our map anyway and wished us luck. Before we left, he asked us to try the old path rather than the new road, since the surface was safer after rain.

What we finally found was not gold. Under a flat stone, exactly where the key fitted a small metal door, lay a bundle of letters wrapped in oilcloth. They had been written during the war by my great-grandfather, who had worked at a radio station and had helped to transmit warnings to villages further down the valley. The letters described his fear, his hope and his trial love for the woman in the photograph. Reading them in the wind, I understood that we had discovered something far more valuable than money. We had no trouble carrying the box home, and today the letters are kept in a glass case in my mother's living room. Every visitor who reads even one page is truly moved by them.

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