The Workshop by the Canal (B2 · English B2)

Tekst / Transcript

When Elena inherited her grandfather's workshop by the canal, she had no idea what to do with it. The building was narrow, damp and cold, and the roof leaked whenever it rained. Her friends advised her to sell it immediately. Yet something about the place held her attention: the walls of dark red brick had been laid by hand, and the marks of the builders were still visible near the door.

Inside, the workshop smelled of dust and machine oil. Heavy tools hung on the walls, and a long bench ran the whole length of the room. Elena discovered that the bench legs were made of steel, welded roughly together and painted black many years ago. Nothing in the room had been chosen for beauty; everything had been chosen because it would last. She spent a whole weekend simply cleaning, and by Sunday evening she had decided not to sell.

Her grandfather had produced small parts for boat engines, and boxes of them were still stacked in the corner. Some were metal, but others had been cut from thick rubber, which had stayed soft and springy despite the years. Elena tested one between her fingers and smiled. She began to imagine a different kind of business in the same space, one that combined old craft with new design. Her idea, at its core, was simple: repair things rather than replace them.

The following spring she opened a small studio for textile work. She bought cheap cotton and linen at first, because good fabric was expensive and she did not want to waste it while learning. Later, when her customers started ordering scarves and linings, she began working with silk, which was difficult to sew but felt wonderful in the hand. The old bench, built for engines, turned out to be perfect for cutting cloth.

The floor, however, was a problem. It had been poured in concrete decades earlier and had cracked badly near the window, so Elena had it replaced in her second year. During the work she talked for hours with the builder, an older man who had grown up on a farm outside the city. He told her that agriculture had once fed every family in the valley, and that his own parents had sold their land only when the machines became too expensive to replace. Elena listened, and thought about how many workshops and farms had quietly disappeared. She promised herself that hers would stay open a little longer.

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