A New Route for the Valley (B2 · English B2)

Tekst / Transcript

The village of Aldern sat at the end of a long valley road, and for most of its history nothing much had happened there. Then the regional council announced that a new distribution centre would be built ten kilometres away. Some families welcomed the news; others were convinced it would ruin everything they knew. At the first public meeting, the hall was completely full.

Marta, who ran the village shop, had her own worries. She sold bread, vegetables and dairy products from three nearby farms, and those farms depended on customers who might now buy everything at cheaper prices elsewhere. She was not against change, but she wanted to understand it. Before the meeting she wrote down her questions on the back of an order form, and she read them aloud in a steady voice while everyone listened.

The planner from the council answered patiently. He explained that the centre would store and forward goods arriving from the port, and that lorries would use a new bypass rather than the village street. He also admitted that the site would look industrial, with wide grey buildings and floodlights that stayed on all night. Nobody in the hall pretended to like that idea. Still, several younger residents pointed out that there had been almost no paid work in the valley for years.

The question of jobs became the heart of the debate. The centre would need labor on a large scale, especially at night, and the wages offered were better than anything local farms could pay. Marta's nephew said openly that he would apply. An older farmer replied that machines would take over within a decade, and that no promise made in a meeting hall had ever protected anyone. Both arguments were reasonable, and the room fell quiet for a while.

In the end, the council agreed to several conditions. Any material used for the outer walls had to be chosen so that the buildings blended with the landscape, and the lighting had to be reduced after midnight. A local committee would govern the use of the access road, deciding when heavy vehicles were allowed to pass. The council also promised a shuttle bus, since for many families walking or cycling was still the usual mode of travelling to work. For those without a car, this was the only realistic means of reaching the site at five in the morning. Marta went home late, unsure whether the valley had won or lost, but glad that the village had spoken for itself.

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