The Farm Above the Bay (B2 · English B2)

Tekst / Transcript

When Priya inherited the farm, she had never spent more than a weekend in a rural area in her entire adult life. She was thirty-four, she worked in advertising, and she owned no boots. The lawyer's letter explained that the land had belonged to her family for six generations, and that her last uncle had died without children. She flew out expecting to sell everything within a month.

The farm sat on a green slope above a wide bay, in a tropical climate where rain arrived every afternoon like a punctual visitor. The landscape that opened in front of the house astonished her: terraces of dark soil, palms bending over the road, and beyond them the impossible blue of the water. Her uncle's neighbours came to introduce themselves, bringing bread and a bottle of something strong. They spoke about her ancestors as though they had known them personally, which, she slowly realised, several of them had.

The farm itself was in poor condition. Half the fields had returned to weeds, and the main crop that year, a variety of sweet potato, had been left in the ground far too long. Only one small plot still looked cared for: a bed of herbs near the kitchen door, where basil, mint and lemongrass grew in tidy rows. An old woman named Consuela explained that she had watered them every morning out of habit. Priya did not have the heart to tell her the land was going up for sale.

She stayed one week, then two, then a season. She learned that wheat would not grow well in that soil, whatever her uncle had believed, but that coffee and bananas would. She learned to recognise the colony of bats that left the cliff caves at dusk in a single dark cloud. On hot afternoons she walked down to the rocks with the neighbours' children and watched them dive into the clear water without a moment's hesitation. Eventually she joined them, badly, and everyone laughed.

The decision was never made in one clear moment. It simply became obvious, some time between the first harvest and the second, that she was not going back. Her friends in the city thought she had lost her mind, and perhaps she had. But she was sleeping better, her hands had changed, and she could now name every plant between the house and the road. On the evening before the first shipment of coffee left the farm, she sat on the step with Consuela and admitted that she had originally come to sell. Consuela nodded, entirely unsurprised, and said that the land usually had other plans.

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