The Visitor at the Town Hall (B2 · English B2)

Tekst / Transcript

Nobody in Redfield had ever seen anything like the object that landed in the wheat field. It arrived just after midnight, without noise, and by breakfast half the town was standing at the fence. The creature that stepped out was small, grey and clearly an alien. It raised one thin hand, as if it had learned the gesture from our television programmes.

Mayor Harris was woken by three phone calls in a row. He dressed quickly and drove to the field, where a bunch of farmers were arguing about what to do. Some wanted to call the army; others simply wanted to sell tickets. Harris asked everyone to stay calm and to keep at least fifty metres away. He then rang the state governor, who promised to send help within the hour.

The first official to arrive was a nervous young woman from the department of transport, which nobody had expected. She admitted that no rules existed for this situation. Soon after, a helicopter landed and a minister from the capital climbed out, followed by two soldiers carrying a heavy metal chain that they clearly hoped they would not need. The visitor watched all of this with polite interest. It made no attempt to run away, and it never once looked frightened.

By the afternoon, the whole country was watching. In the capital, congress interrupted its normal business, and the senate began an emergency debate that lasted until dawn. One senator argued that the visitor should be treated as a guest of the nation. Another insisted that scientists and the military should work alongside each other rather than in competition. Besides the political arguments, there was a practical problem: nobody could understand a single sound the creature made.

It was a retired music teacher named Sofia who solved it. She sat down beside the visitor on the cold ground and hummed a simple tune. The creature hummed it back, one note higher, and then added a phrase of its own. Within two days, the government and the university had signed a joint agreement to fund her work. The people of Redfield, who had spent years quarrelling about parking and drainage, suddenly began to unite behind one strange, quiet guest. That autumn they even voted to elect Sofia to the town council, though she insisted she knew nothing about politics at all.

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