The Interview She Almost Missed (B2 · English B2)

Tekst / Transcript

Maya had spent three years preparing for this single morning. She had finished her degree in psychology with excellent marks, and everyone in her family assumed that the interview at the research institute would be nothing more than a formality. What they did not know was that she had barely slept. At four in the morning she was still sitting at the kitchen table, reading her notes for the twentieth time.

The anxiety that filled her chest that morning was almost physical. Her hands were cold, her stomach hurt, and she kept imagining the panel of experts staring at her in silence. She tried the breathing exercises she had learnt as a student, but they made very little difference. When the taxi arrived, she nearly told the driver to take her home again.

At the institute she was met by Dr Farrow, a quiet psychologist with grey hair and an unhurried manner. He offered her coffee and asked about her journey. Maya answered too quickly and then laughed at herself, which made the moment even more awkward. To her surprise, he laughed too, and something in the room relaxed. He explained that the interview would last an hour and that she should take her time with every answer.

The first questions were straightforward. Then he asked her why she wanted the position, and her carefully prepared speech disappeared from her mind. Instead she told the truth: her brother had suffered a serious psychological crisis two years earlier, and watching him recover had changed the way she saw her own career. She had never spoken about this in a professional setting before, and afterwards she felt slightly ashamed of having said so much. Dr Farrow simply nodded and wrote something down.

He then described a case study and asked what she could perceive in the patient's behaviour that a doctor might overlook. Maya leaned forward and forgot to be nervous. She spoke about the emotional pressure that long illnesses create, and about how families often suffer in silence. Her answer was long, but nobody interrupted her. She noticed that her voice had stopped shaking.

By the end of the hour, her whole perception of the situation had shifted. These people were not judges waiting for her to fail; they were colleagues testing whether she could think. Dr Farrow told her that the institute needed staff who were ambitious enough to push a project forward, but patient enough to work with vulnerable people for years. He said that the second quality was far rarer than the first.

When she left the building, the sun was out and the street was full of students. Maya realised she was no longer anxious at all, whatever the result might be. What had really motivated her, she understood, was not the salary or the title, but the memory of her brother's slow return to health. That kind of motivation , she thought, does not disappear after a bad week. Three days later the offer arrived by email, and she read it twice before she believed it. She was emotionally exhausted, but she had never felt more certain about a decision in her life.

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