The Bakery on Mill Street (B2 · English B2)

Tekst / Transcript

The bakery on Mill Street had been in the same family for three generations. Every morning at four, Tomas unlocked the door, switched on the ovens and began the same routine he had followed since he was nineteen. Flour, water, salt, time. He liked the quiet hours before the town woke up.

The shop was small, with a round marble table by the window where two customers could sit if they arrived early enough. In summer, a single rose from the garden stood in a jar beside the till. Most residents of the street had known Tomas since childhood, and they came less for the bread than for the conversation. He had managed to retain nearly all his old customers, even after the supermarket opened at the edge of town.

Then a new bakery appeared on the main square. It was bright, modern and cheap, and it quickly became his most serious rival. Sales fell for three months in a row. His accountant suggested that he should get rid of half the products and sell only the two or three that made money. Tomas listened politely and did nothing. He could not resist the idea of a shop without rye bread, however little of it he sold. Instead, he made a careful revision of his prices, raising some and lowering others.

His daughter, who was studying economics in the capital, came home for a week and looked at the accounts. She told him honestly that the root of the problem was not the competition but the opening hours. Nobody in the town could buy bread after five o'clock, because that was when Tomas closed and went home. He argued for two evenings, then agreed to try something new. They kept a small reserve of dough in the fridge and baked a second batch in the afternoon.

By autumn, sales had begun to rise again. The late batch sold out almost every day, and people started to reserve a loaf by phone so they would not miss it. Tomas admitted that he had nearly ruined the business through pure stubbornness. He still refused, however, to open on Sundays. Some things, he said, were not for sale. On his last free morning of the week, he walked to the river with his dog and thought about nothing at all. When his daughter asked whether he would ever resort to selling coffee as well, he laughed and said he would think about it in ten years.

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