The Roof Above the Bakery (B2 · English B2)

Tekst / Transcript

Tomás had inherited the bakery from his aunt, along with its cracked walls and its enormous electricity bill. For two years he simply paid what he owed and complained about it. Then came the summer when the rain stopped altogether. The long drought dried the fields around the town, the price of flour rose sharply, and three farmers he had known all his life gave up their land. Something in him changed after that.

He started reading in the evenings, once the last loaves had cooled. He learned that the heat trapped around the planet came largely from greenhouse gases, and that burning coal, oil and gas released most of them. It surprised him to discover how much of the country's power still came from fossil fuels dug out of the ground. He also learned to measure things. A neighbour helped him calculate the bakery's carbon footprint, and the number was far larger than he had imagined.

The following spring, Tomás borrowed money and covered the flat roof of the bakery with solar panels. They were not beautiful, but by June they were producing more electricity than his ovens needed. He sold the rest back to the grid. On the same roof he built a small greenhouse out of second-hand glass, where he grew herbs and tomatoes for the sandwiches he sold at lunchtime. Customers began climbing the narrow stairs just to see it. His aunt, he thought, would have laughed at him and then approved.

Not everything worked. His first attempt at a rainwater system leaked into the flour store. A supplier promised him mineral water rich in calcium and iron, then delivered ordinary bottles with a fancy label. Tomás complained loudly and got his money back. He learned to check claims before believing them, and to ask what a word like sustainable actually meant when a company printed it on its packaging. Real change, he decided, was measured in bills and numbers rather than in slogans.

By the fourth year the bakery was famous in the region. Journalists came, and a university sent students to study what he had done. One of them explained that the plants on his roof released oxygen into the air and cooled the building at the same time, which was why his upstairs flat had become bearable in August. Another warned him, half seriously, that the strong summer radiation from the sun would ruin his skin if he kept working up there without a hat. Tomás listened to both, bought a hat, and went on baking. He never described himself as an environmentalist. He said only that he had watched the fields turn brown and had decided not to make things worse.

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