The Bridge and the Deadline (B2 · English B2)

Tekst / Transcript

When Nadia was offered the job of site engineer on the old river bridge, she accepted before she had even read the contract. The bridge had been built in 1912, and everyone in town had crossed it at least once. Her task sounded simple enough on paper: check the structure, repair what was damaged, and make sure the crossing could carry modern traffic. In reality, the work turned out to be far harder than she had imagined.

The first survey showed that the bridge could no longer safely bear the weight of heavy lorries. Its capacity had been calculated more than a century earlier, when horses and small carts were the main traffic. Nadia recommended new steel supports under the central section. The council agreed, but only after three long meetings and a great deal of argument about money.

Work began in March. Every morning Nadia climbed down to the riverbank, where the wind came straight off the water, and every morning she had to stretch her stiff arms and shoulders before she could hold a pen. Her small team worked steadily through the cold. Their main job was to strengthen the old iron frame with modern steel plates, which had to be bolted into place by hand. Progress was slow, and the river was rising.

By the middle of April it was clear that the schedule was unrealistic. The team began to struggle with the constant rain, which made the metal slippery and dangerous. Nadia wrote a careful report to the council, explaining exactly why she needed more time. She asked for a six-week extension, and she attached photographs of the flooded riverbank to support her request. To her surprise, the council said yes almost immediately, though they refused to increase her budget by a single euro.

The extra weeks changed everything. With better weather in May, the work moved quickly, and the new supports were finally fixed in place. Nadia also persuaded the engineers to extend the narrow footpath along one side, so that cyclists and walkers would no longer have to share the road with traffic. It was a small addition, but it made the bridge feel like it belonged to the town again. On the day of the reopening, the mayor gave a short speech and a brass band played badly but enthusiastically. Nadia stood at the far end, watching the first cars roll across, and thought that she had never been so tired or so satisfied in her life.

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