A Race Along the Coast (B2 · English B2)

Tekst / Transcript

The annual coastal race was known to be challenging, and this year the organisers had made the route even harder. Runners had to follow a narrow path along the top of a cliff, climb two hills and finish in the market square of the fishing village below. Nobody complained. That mixture of danger and beauty was exactly what brought people back every summer.

Isabel had trained for months. She was not the fastest competitor, but stubbornness was her strongest characteristic, and she had decided long ago that she would finish in the first ten. Her coach, a retired teacher who now ran the local athletics club, gave her the same advice as always. "Stay close to the leaders for the first half," he said, "and don't waste your energy in the wind."

The morning was bright and windy. Spectators stood behind the barriers with flags and cameras, ready to cheer for anyone who passed. A local reporter filmed a short clip of the start for the evening news, which later appeared online and was watched by half the region. The village itself looked charming in the sunshine: white houses, blue shutters, boats in the harbour and gulls turning above the water.

For the first twenty minutes everything went according to plan. Then, on the steepest section, a young runner from the city overtook her and began to pull away. Isabel refused to panic. She kept her rhythm and let the gap grow, knowing that the last hill would punish anyone who started too quickly. Near the top she began to chase the leader, closing the distance metre by metre until she could hear her breathing.

The ending was a classic finish, the kind that people describe for years afterwards. Both women reached the square together, and the crowd made so much noise that Isabel could not hear her own footsteps. She crossed the line half a second behind, exhausted and laughing. Afterwards the chief organiser handed out the medals, and the reporter asked her whether she was disappointed. Isabel shook her head. Second place, she said, had never felt so much like winning.

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