Opening Night at the Old Theatre (B2 · English B2)

Tekst / Transcript

Nobody in the town had expected the old theatre to reopen. It had stood empty for nine years, its windows boarded up and its steps buried under litter that the wind blew in from the market square. Then a young director called Nadia bought it for almost nothing and announced that she would launch her first production there in October. Most people assumed she would run out of money before the summer ended.

She did not. Nadia spent three months on ladders and scaffolding, replacing the lighting so that the stage could finally be seen properly. Her father, a retired electrician, worked beside her every weekend. He complained constantly about the wiring, which was literally hanging out of the walls in places, but he never missed a Saturday. A local photographer came to record the progress and broke an expensive lens when he tripped over a cable. Nadia apologised; he laughed and said the picture had been worth it.

The building itself was full of history. In the entrance hall hung a portrait of the lord whose family had paid for the theatre in 1887, painted in dark colours and a heavy gold frame. Nadia refused to remove it, though she did move it slightly to the left. Some of the old seats were still loose in their frames and had to be bolted down again. The ceiling, once grey, was repainted in a deep blue. Visitors began to drop in during the day simply to see what was happening.

On opening night the town hardly recognised the place. The atmosphere was lively, with people queuing along the pavement half an hour before the doors opened. Ticket prices were deliberately low, because Nadia wanted families to come rather than critics. Her father stood at the back, unwilling to sit down, and every so often he would lean against the wall and close his eyes to listen. When the audience applauded, he clapped likewise, though he pretended he was only stretching his hands.

Afterwards a journalist asked Nadia about her plans. She said the long-term aim was not one successful play but a permanent company, trained locally and paid fairly. It seemed the only logical way to keep the theatre alive, she added, since visiting productions would never come regularly to a town this size. She mentioned that she hoped to start a youth drama league, with schools competing against each other twice a year. The journalist wrote everything down and asked whether she would ever leave the town for a bigger stage in the capital. Nadia looked around the crowded foyer and shook her head, and nobody who was there that night doubted her.

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