The Warehouse on Dock Road (B2 · English B2)

Tekst / Transcript

Inspector Adeyemi arrived at the warehouse on Dock Road just after midnight, when the rain had already turned the yard into a shallow lake. The building had come down at around nine o'clock, and the noise of the collapse had been heard three streets away. Nobody had died, which everyone agreed was close to a miracle. Two night guards had walked out with nothing worse than dust in their lungs. The destruction of the roof, however, was total; there was simply nothing left to repair.

Her first problem was information. Half a dozen witnesses had already given statements, and every one of them contradicted the others. One man swore he had heard a car crash into the wall shortly before the building fell. Another was certain there had been no vehicle at all. A third mentioned a woman in a yellow coat, and then admitted, after some thought, that this might have been a different night entirely. Adeyemi wrote everything down anyway. In her experience, the confusion of the first hour usually contained one small, useful truth.

The structural engineer arrived at two in the morning, unshaven and irritated. He explained that the steel supports had been corroding for years and that the owners had ignored three separate warnings. His report was long and, to Adeyemi's ear, deliberately confusing, full of technical language that seemed designed to protect somebody. When she asked him directly whether the collapse could have been caused on purpose, he hesitated. That hesitation interested her more than anything he actually said. She began to suspect that money, rather than metal fatigue, lay at the centre of the case.

By the following afternoon the owner's lawyer had arrived to defend his client in front of the cameras. He spoke smoothly about safety standards and unfortunate weather, and he described the insurance claim as an ordinary piece of business. Adeyemi watched the broadcast from her office with a cup of cold tea. She had met that kind of defense before: polished, confident, and full of holes. A colleague joked that the lawyer would make a good defender in a football team, since he blocked every question before it reached the goal. Nobody laughed very much.

The case turned three days later, when a young accountant walked into the station without an appointment. She had worked for the company for six years and had kept copies of every email. Among them was a short message from the managing director, written like a military command: sell nothing, sign nothing, wait for the building to go. Reading it, Adeyemi felt the familiar quiet satisfaction of a puzzle closing. Her sergeant, a former soldier, said the man had behaved like a commander sending other people into danger from a safe distance. It was not a bad description. The arrest itself was undramatic and took four minutes in a car park. For the accountant, who had feared losing her career, it felt less like a legal victory than a personal defeat of the fear that had kept her silent for so long.

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