

# The lamp in the station window

Translate an original fictional excerpt into restrained literary German, preserving perspective, imagery and unresolved emotion.

Audience: Adult readers of a quiet contemporary story; German as used in Germany.

**SOURCE / en-GB / 185 words**

The station clock had stopped at six, although the town outside had carried on without it. Rain brushed the empty platform. From the station doorway, Mara could see one yellow lamp in the window of the house across the tracks.

Her father had told her that a lit window was a kind of promise. Someone was still awake; someone would hear you knock. As a child, she had believed every house kept that promise. Now she knew better, but she watched the lamp all the same.

In her coat pocket lay a small brass key. It belonged to a door she had not opened in eleven years. She turned it between her fingers, feeling the worn tooth that had always caught in the lock.

A man appeared at the far end of the platform, carrying a folded newspaper over his head. He did not ask where she was going. He only nodded towards the waiting room and said that the kettle was still warm.

Mara looked once more at the yellow window. Then she followed him inside, leaving the question of the door for morning.

## TRANSLATION CHOICES

1. The clock and city retain their quiet personification. "Regen strich" preserves the tactile rain image without adding sound or a stronger storm.
2. Indirect recollections use German Konjunktiv I where natural ("sei", "halte"); "dich" retains the intimate second-person promise of the source.
3. The lamp and window recur as yellow light. The final door question remains unresolved; no reunion, destination or decision is invented.

**TRANSLATION / de-DE**

Die Bahnhofsuhr war um sechs stehen geblieben, doch draußen hatte die Stadt ohne sie weitergelebt. Regen strich über den leeren Bahnsteig. Von der Bahnhofstür aus sah Mara im Fenster des Hauses jenseits der Gleise eine gelb leuchtende Lampe.

Ihr Vater hatte ihr gesagt, ein erleuchtetes Fenster sei eine Art Versprechen. Jemand war noch wach; jemand würde dich klopfen hören. Als Kind hatte sie geglaubt, jedes Haus halte dieses Versprechen. Jetzt wusste sie es besser, doch sie blickte trotzdem auf die Lampe.

In ihrer Manteltasche lag ein kleiner Messingschlüssel. Er gehörte zu einer Tür, die sie seit elf Jahren nicht geöffnet hatte. Sie drehte ihn zwischen den Fingern und spürte den abgenutzten Zahn, der sich immer im Schloss verhakt hatte.

Am anderen Ende des Bahnsteigs erschien ein Mann, der eine gefaltete Zeitung über seinen Kopf hielt. Er fragte nicht, wohin sie unterwegs war. Er nickte nur in Richtung Warteraum und sagte, der Wasserkessel sei noch warm.

Mara sah noch einmal zu dem gelb erleuchteten Fenster hinüber. Dann folgte sie ihm hinein und ließ die Frage nach der Tür bis zum Morgen ruhen.

## CHECKS PERFORMED

All 15 source sentences have a corresponding German sentence across the same five paragraphs. The English source is reused unchanged from NM-D08.

The six o'clock reading, eleven-year interval, brass key, worn tooth, newspaper, warm kettle and morning deferral are preserved.

Automated structure/text checks and AI review of meaning, German spelling, grammar and punctuation were completed.