The Farmhouse Deal (B2 · English B2)

Tekst / Transcript

When Nadia inherited a small farmhouse from her aunt, she had no idea what to do with it. The building stood at the edge of a village, surrounded by fields, and the roof had been leaking for years. Her first thought was to sell it quickly. Her second thought, which arrived a week later, was far more ambitious: she would turn the place into holiday accommodation for walkers and cyclists.

The idea was easy to imagine and much harder to finance. Nadia sat down at the kitchen table with a notebook and tried to work out how much money she actually had. Her savings account contained less than she remembered, and the figure at the bottom of the page looked painfully small. She wrote down every job that needed doing, from the roof to the bathroom tiles, and then asked a local builder to come and look at the property. He walked through every room, tapped a few walls and promised to send her a written estimate by the end of the week. When it arrived, the total made her put the paper face down on the table.

Still, she refused to give up. She phoned an accountant who had worked with her aunt for years, and he explained patiently how a small business loan would work. He also warned her that she should never spend the whole amount she borrowed on the first stage of the work. Some of it, he said, had to be kept for the surprises that always appear in old buildings. Nadia listened, took notes and felt slightly less frightened. Over the following months she learned to bargain hard with suppliers, something she had never done in her life before.

She discovered that patience saved her a remarkable price of money. A kitchen company offered her a twenty percent discount because she was ordering in winter, when nobody else was buying. A neighbour sold her six good windows for a ridiculous bargain, simply because he wanted them out of his barn. Once, however, things went badly wrong: a delivery of furniture arrived three weeks late and half of it was damaged, so she had to cancel the whole order and start again with a different firm. The bill for the first order still turned up in her post, and it took four phone calls before the company finally admitted its mistake.

By the following spring the farmhouse was ready. It could accommodate eight guests, or ten if the children slept in the attic room. Behind the house lay a single acre of rough grass, which Nadia mowed into a garden with a fire pit at one end. On the opening weekend, an elderly couple from the city paid in cash, counting out the notes and joking that they had not spent a buck on anything so worthwhile in years. Nadia stood in the doorway afterwards, exhausted and quietly proud, and thought that her aunt would probably have approved.

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