TRANSCRIPT · EPISODE 227

They Asked for a Reference I Didn't Have

English learning resource · EN

Full episode script · English

80 lines

Study task: Listen again and notice the expressions you studied.

It was a rainy Thursday, and I was standing in the hallway of a house in Wolverhampton.

I had just seen a room I could afford.

Then the woman showing me the house asked for something I did not have.

Welcome to Your English Toolbox and another chapter of Juan's Second Year.

What did she ask you for, Juan?

A reference from a previous landlord in the UK.

A landlord is the person who rents a home or a room to you.

A reference is a short statement about you from someone who knows you.

I had no letter from a British landlord.

For a moment, I thought the room was already lost.

Why was this room so important?

It was near a bus stop, and I could get to university and to the café where I work.

The rent was within my budget.

I had been looking for a while, so I could imagine putting my books on the shelf.

What did the woman say exactly?

Mrs Dhillon told me the owner usually asked for a landlord's reference.

She was polite, but she could not promise me the room without checking.

What went through your mind?

I had paid rent and worked hard, but I did not have the paper she wanted.

For a few seconds, I felt as if my life here did not count.

I almost thanked her and left.

But you stayed.

Yes.

On the bus, I had practised asking questions instead of just saying yes when I felt nervous.

So I took a breath.

I said, “I understand.

Is there an alternative you would accept?”

And did she have an answer?

She said it depended on the owner.

Then she asked what other evidence I could offer.

I thought about the café.

“Could my employer write a reference instead?”

That is a useful question.

You offered an option and let her check it.

She said it might help, but she needed the owner's decision.

She asked for a letter with my job title, start date and working hours.

She could wait until Monday at noon.

So you had a possibility, and a deadline.

The next morning I asked Dawn, my manager at the café, for a favour.

She said she wanted to help, but the café was busy and she was leaving early.

She could not promise to write it that day.

What did you do?

I offered to write down the details Mrs Dhillon needed.

Dawn agreed to check them after the morning rush.

But when we looked at the start date, neither of us was completely sure.

That could have delayed everything.

I found my first payslip at home that evening.

It was the paper showing how much I was paid.

I sent Dawn the date.

On Saturday she gave me the signed letter.

She had included my hours and the date I joined.

She had also written that people could rely on me during a busy shift.

How did it feel to read that?

I read that sentence twice.

I had been so worried about the reference I did not have that I had forgotten the trust I had earned.

Did the owner accept it?

I sent the letter on Saturday afternoon.

Mrs Dhillon replied that the owner would read it on Monday.

I kept checking my phone.

And on Monday?

Just before noon, a message arrived.

The owner was happy to go ahead with my application.

I still needed to read the agreement and arrange the details, but the room was no longer just a possibility.

Who did you tell first?

I told Dawn at the café.

Then, on our next Sunday call, I told my mother.

She asked if I had felt I was starting again from zero.

I said, “For a moment, yes.

But I had people here who knew my work.”

Let's keep two questions from your story.

“Is there an alternative you would accept?”

“Could my employer write a reference instead?”

You can use the first when someone asks for a document you do not have.

Give it a try aloud.

Is there an alternative you would accept?

What worked for Juan was accepted by one owner in one situation.

Ask the person handling your application what they will accept.

Thank you for sharing your story, Juan.

Thank you for listening.

See you next time.