

## Carpet of Dreams

### The Right Choice

**Listen to this conversation between Niki, the employer and business owner of an Interior Design Company, and Alex, one of the young interior designers.**

**Niki:** Ah yes, Alex, please come in. Take a seat. Well, we have a rather difficult situation.

**Alex:** Difficult? Oh, is there a problem?

**Niki:** Well, yes to be quite honest, there is. I'm sorry, but things are not looking good for you.

**Alex:** Not looking good for me? I don't understand. I thought you were happy with my work.

**Niki:** Alex, I was happy. In fact, I think that you're probably one of the best interior designers I've ever met. You're young, you're extremely talented, but -

**Alex:** But what?

**Niki:** Unfortunately, we've received a serious complaint from our biggest client.

**Alex:** You mean the hotel?

**Niki:** Yes, the hotel. Look, as you know, this client is extremely important to us and I cannot afford to lose them. That hotel is a huge project.

**Alex:** What? Why? I've been working so hard on this project - I mean the rooms, the restaurant, the lobby. I thought they liked all my designs.

**Niki:** The designs yes, they're very happy with all your ideas - but there is a problem. They've told me that you do not listen to them. Alex, you have to listen to the client. Listen to what they want!

**Alex:** I'm sorry I don't understand. Of course I listen to the client. I'm confused.

**Niki:** It's about the carpets.

**Alex:** The carpets?

**Niki:** They told me that you refuse to listen. They ask for certain carpets but you always suggest something else. What's going on?

**Alex:** The carpets? Oh, now I understand.

**Niki:** Well, I don't! All I know is they need at least twenty large, top quality handmade carpets - and there's a problem. So could you please tell me what's happening?

**Alex:** Please give me a moment to explain. Ok, when I was studying interior design in college -

**Niki:** College? Why are you talking about college? Alex, this is the real world!

**Alex:** Exactly and I'm talking about the real world - just let me explain.

**Niki:** Very well, but I have to warn you, your job is on the line.

**Alex:** Ok, just hear me out. As I was saying, when I was a design student in college, we had an amazing lecture about the backstory of handmade carpets.

**Niki:** The backstory? What do you mean? The designs? The history of carpets?

**Alex:** No, no not the designs or the history. I mean the carpets themselves - the backstory, the source, where carpets come from, or more importantly, who makes them.

**Niki:** Yes? Go on, I'm listening.

**Alex:** I'll never forget that lecture. It was really shocking and upsetting. We saw so many photos of little children who are forced to make these beautiful carpets.

**Niki:** What? Children?

**Alex:** Yes! Children. Look, while we're sitting here in your office talking, thousands and thousands of children are sitting in front of carpet looms - and not by choice. These little kids are forced to work up to 14 hours a day. They're beaten, they're starved, they're miles away from their families - and of course they are not paid. And I'm not talking about an after-school job to help their family. These

children are forced to work - they can't escape. It's child slavery.

**Niki:** Slavery? Come on, Alex, this is the 21st century. Slavery is illegal.

**Alex:** It may be illegal but it still exists - and certainly in the handmade carpet industry.

**Niki:** Well, why don't all these little children just run away?

**Alex:** And go where? Their family is probably hundreds of miles away. These children have no idea where they are. They're terrified, and they've seen what happens to the children who try to escape.

**Niki:** Well, I'm sorry about the children, but really Alex, what's this got to do with us? You're an interior designer and I'm a business owner.

**Alex:** It has everything to do with us. The point is - we have a choice. Personally and professionally, when I have a choice between buying a product that is ethical or a product that might have been made by forced labour - of course I will buy the ethically sourced product. Wouldn't you do the same?

**Niki:** Yes, of course I would. But, I've had this interior design company for over fifteen years. I can't believe I don't know about this. Why didn't you tell me earlier?

**Alex:** I'm sorry, I thought you knew. I thought everybody knew. I think all the young designers know - that's why we use carpets with the GoodWeave label.

**Niki:** The what?

**Alex:** The GoodWeave label. If a carpet has the GoodWeave label on the back it means that no forced labour was used in the making of the carpet. Can I use your laptop for minute? See, look here - this is their site.

**Niki:** Let me see? Goodweave.org 'end child labour in global supply chains'. This is amazing. Do you show this to our clients?

**Alex:** Yes, I do.

**Niki:** And what do they say?

**Alex:** Clients are thrilled when they learn what it means to own a GoodWeave carpet. I remember one client thanked me and said, 'Of course we want a GoodWeave carpet. Why would we pay to have a carpet of sadness and pain in our home.'

**Niki:** Good point. But is the GoodWeave label only high-end carpets, I mean carpets that are more expensive?

**Alex:** No, not at all. My brother is a student at university and he has hardly any money at all, but he bought a GoodWeave carpet from a low-budget store - at a really affordable price!

**Niki:** Really? That's good to hear.

**Alex:** Niki, I'm truly sorry about the hotel. I tried to talk to them about ethically sourced carpets. I mentioned child labour but they said it wasn't their problem.

**Niki:** What about the cost of GoodWeave carpets? Is there a big difference?

**Alex:** No, not at all. Perhaps if you spoke to them, they'd listen?

**Niki:** Oh yes I'm certainly going to speak to them. Let's set up a meeting with the hotel manager and her team. I'd like you to tell them about GoodWeave.

**Alex:** Me?

**Niki:** Yes, I want you to put together a presentation about everything you've told me today. Use photos and videos if you want to.

**Alex:** Thank you! I'd love to. So, does this mean I'm not going to lose my job?

**Niki:** Lose your job? Absolutely not! In fact, I should thank you. I know I'm the owner of this company, but right now I feel like the student. You've opened my eyes. I have an idea. I want to set up a meeting for Monday morning with everyone in the company. From now on, we will only offer our clients carpets that have the GoodWeave label.