

Chapter 1

Friday, July 29

"You will never reach your destination if you stop to throw stones at every dog that barks."

– Winston Churchill

I do not remember where I read this quote anymore, but it stayed with me for some reason.

It echoed in my mind every step of this journey called *life*. My interpretation of the quote is that the barking dogs denote all the negative energies that can leave an enormous impact on us, be it positive or negative. However, deciding who impacts our lives and who doesn't is in our hands. This world is filled with all kinds of people, good and bad, but all have certain people who encourage us to become better versions of ourselves.

Conversely, some people can never tolerate seeing anyone else succeed, so they constantly criticize, bicker, and nitpick to create roadblocks for them. These people can come across as someone from the family, certain people at work, anyone, or anything that tries to hold you down. As we are social animals, interacting with others also counts as an integral part of living a healthy life, but it is important to remember that not everyone would offer you the support you need.

It is common knowledge that every person navigates through life with a unique approach, and it takes conscious decision-making to do what is right. I firmly believe that it is in our hands to shape our lives; while some people opt for a pessimistic approach, others choose to be optimistic. However, my motto had always been to face everything positively.

Reflecting on life, I now realize that I would not have survived if I had not been positive throughout all of my life.

If it were not for my resilience and positive thinking, everything would have turned out completely different than how it is. I would have easily given up on surviving in the deeply flawed American corporate world. However, I worked tirelessly for years and maintained my optimism, but ultimately, my job was taken away.

Nonetheless, I did not let that deviate me from the path of looking at life with optimism. I was still hopeful that life had a lot more to offer me. I could think that way only because of all my father had taught me and my own perception of life.

Hence, I managed to stay calm and collected even when hit by the biggest blow of my life; a termination letter.

It was a fine Friday morning on July 29, 2022. The day was bright and beautiful. The temperature hovered around eight one Fahrenheit. I grabbed my laptop and turned it on around 6:50 a.m., as I was about to start work by 7:00 a.m. I ran through the Octa validation process through my iPhone to authenticate myself as an authorized user and finally logged into my network and slacked to Team Nagdah. I did everything I did daily.

"Good morning! It is Friday!" I typed and sent it.

I waited for a few seconds, but there was no response from the team members. Perhaps, they were still deep in their slumber. Most of my team members started their work by 9. A Slack from Sr. Director Software Engineering, Kevin Mize, was posted in the early hours of July 29 related to Team Nagdah's most critical project, MoneyMaker (MM). MM application' pods have been seeing occasional restarts in production since the latest and most significant deployment 9 hours ago.

I just remembered that the latest deployment was at the 15th hour on Thursday, July 28, which was a quick and uneventful deployment. I was one of the approvers in Azure Dev Ops, release id# 299. I volunteered and created the Runbook for the deployment. It was a fix for MemberPlanProductChanged flow, a fix of technical debt, and a fix for removing matches for members meaning patients who opted for "do not call."

Kevin posted a screenshot of New Relic, our Application performance monitoring system showing the pods which were occasionally restarting. In response to Kevin's Slack, there was Slack from Quality Engineer IV, Bogdan Clinton, at half past 7 a.m., "Dang @KevinMize - When do you sleep?"

Bogdan worked from the East Coast. So, he was up early since they were an hour early, contrasting with Central Standard Time. Kevin's response was, "Not enough. Was up dealing with dialer issues from yesterday when we had five9 application vendor's wer in the office."

I responded with "@KevinMize Good morning! I hope you get some rest during the weekend!"

Bogdan was one of the team's smartest and most enthusiastic developers and had recently joined us. Bogdan replied, "I can generate a script for all of these members, but that's obviously going to be a lot of updates. Here are the member plan Ids with duplicate elastic member records."

The next Slack post came from Collin McGraw, site reliability engineer, "I shall miss stand up today."

Reading his words, I assumed he would troubleshoot issues with other teams during Team Nagdah's stand-up. Since the original product manager of MM left a few months back, his boss Ken Schwarber was filling in the Product Owner role, a vital and important role for building a software application.

The product owner has the most significant role in the whole process because they are the ones that act as a bridge between the technical team and the stakeholders. They are responsible for ensuring the business is thriving, as it is considered the bread butter for everything we work on.

Ken sent a Slack message at 9 a.m., right before the stand-up, "I understand we did work around the zero phone number members. Are we making matches against those?"

"Not anymore." Responded Bogdon right away.

The following message came from Software Engineer III, Elvis Clapton, working from Houston, TX, "Running a couple of mins late."

I noticed that the team's conversation had always been subtle and straightforward, as it should be. The stand-up was set up for 9 a.m., and we were to discuss clear updates on all projects, inform about the day's work, and determine whether any bottlenecks were to be resolved.

A thought emerged into my head looking at my profile to add a pronunciation option for my name because I knew it was difficult for the team to pronounce it as it was not native. Just then, I looked at the status options that all employees were given to choose from; working remotely, in a meeting,

commuting, out sick, and vacationing. I realized that during the three years I had worked there, I had never changed my status to 'out sick.'