

his phone and sent it to Nancy with the note “I feel sLOVEnia”. He wondered what she would think. She hadn’t seen him in a tie in ages. Danny felt so relaxed, more than he had for a long time. What felt odd for him was that he couldn’t quite define why he felt this way. For the first time, somewhere deep inside him, he believed that he was working in the right direction. He also felt a warm tingle of anticipation about the events to come.

Danny looked out the large hotel window. Ten floors below, an enormous outdoor shopping mall stretched out, punctured by a tall gray glass skyscraper in its midst. He guessed that this was Crystal Palace. The office building was home to the R&D department of Outfit7. Beyond it, the white chain of the Alps looked like frozen waves in the distance. The mountains were truly magnificent. He hoped that the team building would bring him closer to them.



CHAPTER SIXTEEN

The Tipping Point

Krk Island, Croatia / Ljubljana, Slovenia, 29 June 2010

Talking Tom made it through the Apple review process. It's live in the app store!

Iza had been expecting this text message from her husband all morning. Satisfied, she set down her phone and turned her eyes to the horizon and the sea, which twinkled above her bright red-polished toenails. So it began.

A large cargo ship sailed slowly along the faint line linking the sea and the sky, and she allowed herself to just watch its slow flow westward across the calm horizon. She adjusted the towel beneath her back on the lounge, put on her oversized sunglasses, and tilted her straw hat down low to shade her face from the powerful summer’s morning sun. It felt very good that she had not forsaken her traditional mini-break in late June. The kids were at camp, her husband was at work, and she was on the beach. Ideal. The vacation suited her, especially after such a tough slog, balancing her own projects, her children, and doing what she could to help with this new animated cat app. She felt certain that this was a turning point for Outfit7, no matter which direction it would turn. She did not doubt that it would be a positive one. The manifestation had been made, the niche market

looked promising, the product was good, and the team had done a great job with developing the app. The only possibility was for it all to move positively forward. She picked up a thick novel, opened its soft covers, and found the page where she'd left off. A few sentences went by before the phone beeped again. She put the book down and checked the text. Samo again.

TT already has its first downloads. Still trickling in.

"I'm delighted. Keeping my fingers crossed that it'll continue," she typed back. She raised her head again and looked into the distance. The cargo ship's dark silhouette was slowly melting into the surface of the sea. She'd always wondered what it would be like to be a sailor on such a ship. For months you'd be onboard with the same people, all working to reach a distant destination. Such a ship seemed like a good metaphor for any organization. All the sailors work together to achieve a common goal. If each sailor turned the rudder on their own, they'd never get anywhere. She wondered if Outfit7 was one such ship. Of course it is. The goal is clear, we have a great captain and a dedicated team of sailors.

She opened her novel again. It was just starting to engross her in the mystery when her phone beeped again.

We earned our first \$50 from ads.

"I'm happy to say I told you so. We knew that this was the right path," she whispered to herself as she replied to her husband's text. She finished off her lemonade, leaned back, and continued reading.

Beep. The phone, again.

Downloads are flying. Another \$100.

"Our fruit, tea, and coffee for next week is covered. We'll soon have enough to fill our winter pantry." She texted back and smiled to

herself. The thought of fresh fruit made her thirsty under the heat of the sun. She raised her hand and called over the waiter to ask for another lemonade. Once more she lifted the book and was about a paragraph in when...

Beep.

Fruit, coffee, tea for 2 weeks: covered. Winter = realistic possibility.

The waiter brought a lemonade and set it down on the table next to her lounge. He had noticed how often she'd started reading only to be interrupted by her phone, and he thought it was a little comical. She either has a boss who won't leave her alone, the waiter considered, or a secret admirer. Or both, and they're one and the same.

Over the following few minutes, the texts kept popping up.

\$200.

Another \$150.

\$300.

Iza stopped replying, as they were coming in too quickly. She tried to read but she was pleasantly distracted, what with all the excitement and the beeping messages. All she could think about was that they'd finally hit the jackpot. The manifestation had apparently begun to work its wonders. She looked into the sky and gratefully inhaled the briny sea air. As we requested, by the end of June.

She couldn't take it anymore. So she picked up her phone and called. "What exactly is going on over there?"

"It's a madhouse," said Samo. "The numbers are going wild. We're already into thousands of downloads and we're not even through the first day! I think we're at the start of something big!"

She'd not felt such optimism and positivity in her husband's voice since he'd sold his stake in his previous company. This made her very happy and she sought to emphasize the importance of this moment. "Of course it is. That's exactly what we manifested and worked so hard for. Did you expect anything else?" She giggled sweetly, adding. "This is great to hear. How are the boys taking it?"

"They're jumping around with excitement." Samo held the phone up away from his ear. "Are you in the saddle, boys?"

"Yeah!" was all she heard from a cacophony of voices. He put the phone back to his ear. "Everyone's a little crazy. We're trying to get hold of Andrej but he won't answer his phone at all. He really checks out of the planet when he goes on vacation."

Iza tried to imagine the scene in the office and how her colleagues, along with Samo, were tensely following the numbers and looking forward to each new leap. At the same time, she had Andrej in mind, casually lying with his family on a rocky beach with no idea what was happening. "Let him enjoy his peace in the company of his loved ones. He deserves it."

"Yeah, I know, but he's really missing something special. I would love to share it with him. It's growing like mushrooms after the rain. Cra-zy..." He boiled over with excitement.

"Hey, I'm so happy for us. A cat with a morbid background. Who would've thought...?"

They exchanged a few more words and then hung up. Iza lifted the brim of her straw hat, removed her sunglasses, and stared up at the clouds in the sky. She was permeated with warmth, and not just from the sun. Every cell in her body felt that they had accomplished something significant and right on track for their overarching life mission. She closed her eyes and from deep within her soul she thought, "Thank you."

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A hot cup of tea singed Andrej's fingers as he stepped into the office. It was his first day back after a peaceful family vacation by the sea. An empty fuel tank that morning had prompted him to stop at a gas station on his way to work. Since he knew that would make him late for work, he indulged in his morning black tea in the car. When he entered the office, it was empty, as everyone was gathered in the boardroom. Through the glass wall he saw everyone standing around the conference table. Peter was doing some weird dance around the room. Frenk and Iza were laughing out loud. The others were staring at Samo's laptop in the middle of the table with ear-to-ear grins and bulging eyes. What the heck was wrong with everyone? Were they all drunk on a Monday morning? That must be it. He walked straight to his desk, sat down and turned on his computer. Let's see what's new.

He was looking at the numbers on the screen and each line put him in a darker mood. All the apps he'd been working on, combined, had generated just a few hundred downloads while he'd been on vacation. Leaning back, he crossed his arms behind his neck, and slowly exhaled. He knew that things couldn't keep going on like this. He was really concerned about this company's future and its financial stability. Aside from Iza and Samo, he was the only member of the group with a family. He had responsibilities and, if this didn't work out, he'd have to look for another job. How else could he put food on the table? He should talk to Samo as soon as possible...

"Andreeeeej? What's up, my man!" Peter leaned out the door of the boardroom. "Come on, come here. Frenk just opened a bottle of whiskey. Let's toast!"

Andrej was already annoyed, and this was a step too far. "Have you all gone mad? Our ship is sinking and you're toasting over breakfast!?"

Instead of solving this miserable situation, you're goofing around. You all are out of your minds!"

Peter was totally blindsided by this outburst and looked at him oddly. "What are you talking about? Of course we're goofing around. We have to celebrate."

"Celebrate what? A few hundred miserly downloads? Almost nothing has happened since I left. These numbers are appalling and numbers don't lie. I really don't want to celebrate..."

Peter couldn't believe what he was hearing. "What on earth are you talking about? Don't you know what's going on?"

"Nothing's going on. Just a bunch of weirdos goofing off, drowning their misery in alcohol."

"Andrej, you really didn't check your emails or your phone? Man, you do know how to take a vacation. Talking Tom is a hit. Since its launch we've already recouped its entire development budget."

"Look kiddo, don't fuck with me! I'm not in the mood. Some of us have families and there's nothing funny about this."

"Look at me, Andrej. I am not kidding. Come and see the numbers. They're growing by the second. We're now at over 400,000 downloads. It's a proper hit. That's why we're celebrating."

Andrej was still wrestling with his mind, which was unprepared for this turn of events. He found it hard to pivot from melancholy to excitement. "Are you sure?"

"Come and see for yourself. It's nuts! Samo just told us to cancel all our old projects. We'll just hang onto the crystals app, but the rest are toast. All our energy from now on goes into the cat."

Completely confused, Andrej got up and quickly walked towards the boardroom. Without greeting anyone, he stormed up to Samo and looked at his laptop screen. The others studied him in silence, curious as to what he would say. His pupils dilated and his locked jaw softened. All the tightness he'd felt in his shoulders, the physical repercussions of his burden, instantly evaporated. "You've gotta be kidding. It's true?"

Samo crossed his arms and looked deeply into Andrej's eyes with great satisfaction. "Yup, it's true. We found a niche and we filled it quickly. It's already going viral. Exploded like a supernova over the weekend. It seems that our gray cat is going to be an international blockbuster!"