

A Brilliant Senior Engineer

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Sri Raghavan for IEEE NH Newsletter

Preamble

Securing your dream job is a shared aspiration, yet it remains an elusive goal for many. The daily gratification of honing your talents, making a meaningful impact on society, and aligning with a company's values is unparalleled. However, what if the organization you once cherished suddenly deems you incompatible?

Alex Ivanov

For Alex Ivanov, his role as the head engineer was his passion, a labor of love. Little did he expect the abrupt shake-up in leadership that threatened his position. It didn't take long for Alex to seize control of his destiny, hatching a daring scheme that would send shockwaves through the very core of the company.

At 63 years old, Alex Ivanov called a cozy New York City apartment his home. Amidst the bustling cityscape, he found solace in leisurely strolls through Central Park, savoring piroshki delights at Matryoshka and engaging in exhilarating chess matches with his young grandson. Yet, the true essence of his existence revolved around unraveling the mysteries and problem-solving.

An engineer par excellence, Alex stood at the helm as the head engineer in a distinguished civil engineering firm nestled within the city's urban heart. With over 25 years of dedication and relentless climb up the professional ladder, he had etched his legacy. However, the impending betrayal lurking within the very sanctuary where he had thrived, he could never have foreseen.

Moscow was Alex's birthplace, but his early years were a crucible of challenges. In 1970, his family's escape from the iron grip of the USSR led them to the United States, thrusting a young boy into the whirlwind of adaptation. Learning English, forging friendships, and navigating the intricate dance of Cold War era tensions became his daily struggle.

Within this tumultuous backdrop, Alex's father, Sergei, held a deep affection for American music, amassing a treasure trove of vinyl records. It was a fateful day when 14-year-old Alex boldly dismantled Sergei's cherished record player and skillfully pieced it back together that his parents realized their son harbored an extraordinary gift.

In a decisive moment, Alex made a solemn vow: he would become an engineer and repay the country that had bestowed refuge upon his family. His dedication knew no bounds as he immersed himself in rigorous studies, earning a prestigious scholarship to MIT at the tender age of 17.

By 1980, Alex had ascended to the pinnacle of his class, emerging as the valedictorian, his spirit ablaze with inspiration and determination. Yet, the euphoria of his accomplishments soon gave way to a creeping disillusionment as the young Russian immigrant began to grapple with the unsettling realities of his treatment. Amidst the tumultuous backdrop of the early '80s New Cold War, Alex found himself ensnared in an uphill battle to secure employment. The mere sound of his Slavic accent was often enough to evoke hasty farewells, with companies slamming phones or doors shut in his face without a second thought.

The era was rife with hostility, fear, and an unsettling surge of xenophobia, and Alex, despite his exceptional engineering prowess, bore the brunt of this prejudice. Reduced to working with meager radio repair jobs, he made ends meet. In those trying times, Matryoshka always offered him borscht whether he could afford it or not.

Landing His Dream Job

The long-awaited turning point in Alex's life arrived with the dramatic collapse of the USSR. While diligently repairing a radio belonging to the CEO's spouse at one of the state's most prominent civil engineering giants, fortune finally smiled upon him. Impressed by his craftsmanship, the CEO extended an encouraging invitation, urging Alex to seek an available position within the company.

Stepping into the interview room, Alex dazzled the panel with his encyclopedic knowledge, innovative mindset, and unwavering commitment to precision. It was no surprise that he clinched the job. As the years rolled on, Alex's star ascended, culminating in his appointment as the head engineer.

Not a Spring Chicken Anymore

Nonetheless, Alex had reached the ripe age of 63, a stage in life where the chapters of

family raising were behind him. His heart still bore the scar of his wife's untimely departure due to a sudden brain tumor when he was 60. Amidst the shadows of his grief, his job became a lifeline, a distraction that kept his mind occupied.

Yet, the relentless march of time was undeniable. Alex found himself grappling with a stark reality—he was no longer the swift and nimble thinker he once was. The relentless pace of technological advancement had left him feeling somewhat left behind. And slowly, he sensed a shifting landscape within the company...

In Came the New CEO

One fateful day, the CEO, who happened to be the offspring of the previous CEO who had once embraced Alex, made a momentous announcement: he was relinquishing his role. The firm promptly introduced a new ship captain, carrying high hopes that he would instigate a radical transformation, ushering the company into the modern era.

This freshly minted CEO hailed from the heart of Silicon Valley's tech juggernauts. It didn't take him long before he put a miniature basketball hoop in the office... His lexicon was peppered with buzzwords, and he preferred sending voice notes over emails. Alex found himself a spectator in this unfolding drama, worried for his position.

Fateful Meeting With HR

Shortly after the new CEO's regime began, Alex found himself being called in by the HR department, beckoning him for an unexpected "chat." Never before had he been summoned to HR's chambers, leaving him nervous and confused. Had someone filed a grievance against him, or had he unwittingly stirred some unknown controversy?

As he trod the path to the office of the freshly appointed head of HR, a gnawing sense of foreboding clenched at his insides. The idea that this meeting might entail a discussion about a raise seemed improbable; the atmosphere was fraught with an impending revelation that was about to confirm his suspicions.

Take a Seat

A tentative knock on the door elicited a dulcet response, "Come in." Stepping into the room, Alex was greeted by Vivian, a youthful and striking presence seated behind the desk, her nails impeccably manicured. "Take a seat, Al," she beckoned, causing him to inwardly flinch at the casual abbreviation of his name.

Vivian said, "Now, I just wanted to check in with you and see how you're handling all

these changes. I understand it can be quite unsettling for someone of your... maturity; rest assured, the company is on an upward trajectory, and it's my duty to ensure we remain free from any lingering vulnerabilities," she continued, leaving Alex in the dark about the true purpose of their conversation.

First Red Flag

Vivian leaned forward, her tone shifting from sugary sweetness to something more businesslike. "There's been a matter that's recently come to our attention, and it's imperative that we address it to prevent any reoccurrences. It appears that there have been instances where unauthorized individuals were granted access to our premises."

Alex was initially baffled, his mind racing to grasp the nature of her concern, and then the memory of a week ago surfaced: a contingent of German engineers visiting for a conference had arrived, and he had courteously held the door open for them. He couldn't fathom being penalized for such a simple act of goodwill.

The Beginning of the End

Vivian's words maintained their unwavering cheerfulness as she delivered a message that sent chills down Alex's spine. "Consider this a friendly reminder, okay? We really wouldn't want to see you go. You can go back to your tasks now." The tone in which she addressed him left Alex worried, for he was a seasoned veteran at the company.

Yet, a disconcerting realization began to dawn upon him—the encounter was but a preliminary step toward an imminent departure. A disheartening pattern emerged as he recalled the abrupt early retirements of other senior engineers, and he couldn't help but envision similar cryptic encounters with Vivian as their prelude.

Feeling Scared

With heavy steps, Alex returned to his office... Twenty-five years of his life had been poured into this place, a quarter-century of unwavering dedication to the company's cause. Yet, now it seemed they were eager to usher him toward the exit, a parting devoid of even the courtesy of gratitude.

That evening, Alex broke from his routine, bypassing the customary stop at Matryoshka. He couldn't bring himself to face anyone because it was all too unreal. After all those years of relentless toil and determination, he harbored a profound belief that he deserved better than this, and retirement was a chapter he wasn't ready to embrace just yet.

Something Within Him Changed

The following morning, Alex awoke to a crushing weight pressing down on his chest. It was a monumental effort just to pull himself out of bed. Then, a message from his grandson's words shone like a beacon: "Hi Dedushka, we need someone super cool to speak at our school next week. Will you come? No one else can boast as many amazing achievements as you."

As Alex read those words, tears welled up in his eyes, and an ember of determination ignited within him. The realization struck like a lightning bolt—indeed, he possessed an extraordinary job, one he had excelled at for over a quarter-century. He refused to go down without a fight.

A Man With a Plan

The following day at work, Alex found himself deep in contemplation, carefully weighing his options. The once-beloved company had transformed into something unrecognizable, and he harbored a desire to make them pay for their treatment. The burning question that consumed his thoughts was how best to exact his revenge.

A man of exceptional intellect and cunning, Alex understood that a plethora of tactics were at his disposal to make the new CEO's life a constant torment. He yearned to prove his indispensability, to underscore the importance of expertise in the grand scheme of things. He came up with a meticulously devised plan that seemed nothing short of perfect.

Working Day and Night

Over the ensuing fortnight, Alex embarked on an arduous marathon of overtime, dedicating countless extra hours day in and day out. He returned home each evening utterly drained yet brimming with a sense of satisfaction. Deep down, he was convinced that he was on the right path...

His fellow engineering friends couldn't help but notice the transformation in their friend. When they probed, Alex would merely respond with a cryptic grin, hinting that the revelation of his actions would arrive in due course. They assumed he was putting in the extra effort to secure his position. Little did they know, their assumptions were far from the truth.

The Day of Reckoning

The long-awaited day had dawned at last. Alex had meticulously crafted his resignation letter, and it now rested neatly typed on his desk, ready to seal his fate. Donning his most impeccable suit, he added a personal touch to the day by bringing in a batch of exquisite Russian sweets for the staff room.

With resolve in his stride, Alex marched down the corridor toward Vivian's office. He rapped gently on her door, but she received him with an air of irritation, engrossed in a lively phone conversation with a friend. Undaunted, Alex made a dramatic gesture as he tossed the letter onto her desk. It wouldn't be long before she would rue her treatment of this master engineer.

Here Come the Phone Calls...

With a sense of finality, Alex gathered his belongings and exited the office, his steps filled with purpose. The knowledge that he had a surplus of unused vacation days rendered any notion of serving a customary two-week notice obsolete. He was unequivocally done.

As he strode down the bustling street, the insistent buzz of his phone pierced the air. Vivian's frantic voice on the other end left no room for misunderstanding. "Mr. Ivanov—what have you DONE? Get back here right now and fix it! Alex, please! You can't abandon us in this predicament. You have a responsibility to the company."

Not My Job Anymore

"Apologies, Vivian. It's no longer my concern. As for owing the company, let's just say we're even," Alex responded with a measured coolness in his tone. With a decisive click, he ended the call, leaving Vivian's frantic screams to echo in the emptiness. As he walked away, he couldn't help but conjure up mental images of what was happening at the office.

A sense of liberation washed over him, lifting the weight that had burdened him for months. The autumn air was crisp, and Alex decided to treat himself to a leisurely stroll in Central Park. There was no doubt in his mind that his former employers were about to realize the colossal mistake they had made when they attempted to oust Alex Ivanov.

Harnessing His Skills

Throughout those intensive two weeks of overtime, Alex had embarked on a clandestine mission to ensure the company's swift descent into chaos once he'd departed. As the

venerable head engineer, he wielded a skillset far surpassing the new CEO's tech-savvy aspirations.

With relentless determination, he had harnessed those skills, deploying them strategically to unravel the company's operations. He was aware that there was no one within the organization with the competence to salvage the wreckage. The moment of reckoning was nigh, and he couldn't wait to witness the seismic impact of his masterstroke.

The Ball Was in His Court

With calculated precision, Alex had meticulously tampered with the blueprints for the company's myriad projects, blueprints that he had personally crafted over the years. Subtle alterations were woven into each design, modifications so nuanced that only a seasoned expert could discern them. In his resignation letter, Alex laid bare the extent of his machinations.

But that was not all. Alex had ventured into the digital realm, enhancing the software that governed the office building's operations. Key cards ceased to function, the Wi-Fi blinked into oblivion, and a myriad of passwords underwent metamorphosis. The result was a state of utter chaos, a tumult that shook the foundations of the once-cohesive workspace.

No One Else Knew

From within, Alex had orchestrated the company's ruin, an intricate symphony of sabotage. He held the exclusive knowledge of precisely what changes had been wrought and, more importantly, how to rectify them. Yet, the solutions remained tightly clenched within the recesses of his mind, securely guarded against any hasty disclosure.

In his ruthless pursuit to make a resounding point, Alex had exacted a harsh toll, an indelible lesson that he intended to etch into the company's collective memory. He aimed to unveil the stark consequences of the organization's ruthless purging of older employees. The aftermath of Alex's takeover came with ramifications that even he had not foreseen.

This Was Unexpected

The company found itself in shambles, unable to utilize any plans from the past year. The CEO, surrounded by his team of trendy, inexperienced colleagues, grappled with the chaos. It became glaringly evident how little he truly understood the industry he was

supposed to lead.

As he sat in his office, head in his hands, he realized he could no longer keep a closely guarded secret and had no choice but to reveal it. It was finally no longer a secret that he wasn't as well-equipped for the job as everyone had made out. Proving what Alex had already thought... That people don't always respect those older than them.

Late Night Knock on the Door

As nightfall cast its shadow, a hesitant knock echoed through Alex's door. What if Vivian had somehow found a way to involve the authorities? Yet, it wasn't the police that stood on his doorstep; instead, it was Trent, the newly appointed CEO, his countenance pallid and brimming with desperation.

"Alex, I'm so sorry," Trent began, his voice trembling with sincerity. "Please, consider returning to our fold. I'm aware I haven't treated your senior colleagues well, but the truth is, I'm drowning in this role. I've never confided this in anyone, but my father bought my way into MIT. I failed the SATs. I'm way over my head. Please, man, I implore you, you've got to help me."

Unsure of What to Do

As Alex gazed upon the once-powerful young CEO, a sense of pity washed over him. The aura of swagger and confidence that had initially surrounded the man now seemed to have faded into pitiable vulnerability. The revelation that this CEO had, through subterfuge, gained entry into MIT, where Alex had earnestly earned his education, was nothing short of eye-opening.

In that pivotal moment, Alex found himself holding all the cards. The pursuit of revenge had once fueled him, but now he could see the tangible toll of pain and stress his actions had exacted. He turned to Trent, a measured resolve in his voice. "Alright, I'll assist you in setting things right, but there are a few conditions," Alex said to the CEO.

Working Together Again

In a surprising twist, Alex decided to return to the company, albeit for just one week—a brief window within which to mend the havoc he had sown. Trent's gratitude overflowed in a near-groveling display, but Alex harbored a broader vision for how the organization could be reformed, especially for the colleagues he was leaving behind.

First, he secured the CEO's commitment to enroll the company in an age discrimination

seminar, instigating a process to implement protective protocols shielding older staff members from unwarranted dismissal. Alex was unwavering in his mission, championing improved severance packages for the colleagues who had been coerced into resigning.

Onwards and Upwards

As the dust settled on the tumultuous chapter he had orchestrated, Alex arrived at a resolute decision—he was far from ready to embrace retirement. In fact, he believed he was operating at the zenith of his professional prowess, a belief more than vindicated by the tumultuous events of the preceding weeks.

Yet, lurking beneath the surface of his determination was a nagging doubt. At 63, would he be able to secure a new position? His tenure with the previous company had imparted a stark lesson in how the world often perceived him as past his prime. Nevertheless, Alex harbored an unwavering resolve—he refused to yield to the notion of surrender.

Senior Positions

Fueled by a newfound determination, Alex embarked on a relentless quest, submitting applications for every senior engineering role that crossed his path. To his surprise, he found himself with not one but three interviews on his plate. The moment they laid eyes on his silvered hair, they seemed to write him off for the first two encounters.

But the third interview proved to be a breath of fresh air. The company exuded a palpable ethos of diversity, embracing a kaleidoscope of ages and backgrounds. It was abundantly clear that Alex would be welcomed with open arms into this inclusive environment. The young interviewer extended an immediate invitation for him to join the team.

First Day Jitters

On his first day at the new company, Alex was plagued by a bout of nerves. However, his fresh colleagues extended a warm, almost familial welcome, making him feel like a long-lost friend returning home. In his new capacity as a consultant, the younger engineers regarded him as nothing short of an oracle—a wellspring of wisdom and experience.

Alex embarked on the journey of guiding his colleagues through their projects, systematically addressing flaws that only he could discern. Finally, Alex found himself basking in the respect he had always deserved. He eagerly anticipated visiting Andrey's

school to spark young minds' curiosity in engineering.

Exciting Things Ahead

From a young boy's dream to becoming an engineer, Alex Ivanov dedicated an unwavering 25 years of his life to a company he believed cherished his expertise. Little did he anticipate the day he would be pushed out, driven to impart a lesson that would resonate long after his departure.

Today, we can only imagine Alex thriving in his new role, imparting his wisdom to younger colleagues and shaping them into exceptional engineers. We hope he still finds time to savor piroshki at Matryoshka and engage in chess battles with his beloved grandson.