

## The New Senior Developer

“Congratulations to our new senior developer!” was the only thing Alice heard that day. Every word after that was lost to the foggy mind, as if she was underwater, eavesdropping on others’ conversations. How else she is supposed to react? She was a new hire a year ago, and lucky to even get an invitation to an interview. Her CV did not contain a single lie, yet everything was a gross exaggeration. Yes, she was always in the 97<sup>th</sup> percentile in every college class. So what? Nowadays, even the top student could be rejected. Also, her internships were pretty normal. Everybody worked at NASA at some point. Considering this, being a little short of breath after promotion is natural.

Last year, she spent all of her time executing her plan. Never speak, and never be spoken to. Her goal: Be invisible. It was going great until she got the task of fixing a bug. A new platform that the company was using for sharing codes was so confusing, that she had to reorganize the interface to get to the bug. Then she spent three days fixing all sorts of things. She was told it was a simple formatting issue, but it had so many logic errors, that it was magically giving the right answers for a couple of entries, but not all. That was it! That was the turning point. The bane of her existence. The moment she will regret till the grave.

“Of course, an MIT graduate wouldn’t have an issue with this, right? I am even ashamed to give you such a task, but newbies get the most boring jobs, you have to bear with me here,” said the supervisor, after appointing her to change of a small feature on their app. Of course? OF COURSE? Where do these people get the confidence? Gone are her dreams of insignificant existence. New plan: Mess up to get the lesser task. She implemented a feedback button, which was what she was asked to do. But here’s the catch: Every time clients push the button, there is a small figure of a goblin, eating up the letters of text, as they type the feedback. How is that for a feature? No serious company would like that. However, her triumph was short-lived. Turns out, Silly Little Goblin was a great source of entertainment, and people who write feedback to the app

operation have a lot of time to spare anyway. Companies that care, have beta-testers, while companies that don't, never even see the clients' comments. This started a new hassle.

The branding team thought it was a great idea to add some personality to the company image. Relatability was selling well on the web. So... They added the goblin to all the comment, feedback, order, and all the interactive sections of the app. Stereotypical green goblin, gym goblin, teacher goblin, pink goblin. The company suddenly turned into a goblin kingdom, and Alice was their queen. With the rise of her sudden popularity, her blood pressure, and migraines also started to frequent her body.

She just wanted to save up some money.

Alice was never ambitious. Personal ambition is like a curse. A disease of the Western world in the eyes of her Asian parents. School, college, major, and a job. All of this was never forced, but heavily implied, because, they worked so hard. Every time they came back from back-to-school shopping, her mother would say, "Oh God! Look at my closet. How should I drop you off on the first day with these clothes?" Her mother never meant to guilt her, yet it was always on her mind. Now, if she buys hundred-dollar shoes, she remembers her mother's closet, and each time she wears it, the closet is in front of her. That in and out of itself reminds her to work and earn. Otherwise, how she will repay them? The guaranteed way to achieve that is to study hard, get good grades, get into a good college, and be a highly paid-software engineer. Such a miserable existence was maintained for solely two reasons. Many kids were dying of hunger, disease, war, and abuse. And she dreamt of moving to Thailand.

"Why Thailand?" you might ask her. To which she would reply: The Sun. The fruits. The abundance of cute guys. This was not an alien concept to her friends. Gone are the days of nuclear families, or overnight millionaires. Young folk nowadays either want a community farm with their pals or lie on a beach, waiting until some kind of climate disaster hits the shores. Is there a better way to end this show?

Her dream was unpromptedly interfered with unsuccessfully successful career. Senior developers had a lot on their hands, which was the opposite of her goals. She already showed her parents she got the job. She was planning to pretend to go to work, until she grows a pair, and reveals to them her true desires. The promotion was simply not on the plan. So, she came up with a new one, again.

Final plan: Be demoted. This plan involved many small steps. Updates were delayed, designs were half done, some codes did not compile, and no junior developers could hear from her. Any responsible company would surely demote or fire a person on site. At least, that's what Alice assumed. However, the delay gave the team time to flesh out some nuances, while half-done designs gave them space for new creative ideas. The debugging for compilation errors revealed many additional issues, and juniors finally learned how to report bugs through the company platforms, not email.

Beautiful disaster.

Her last resort: Get a client to drop the company. If one of the clients ends their contract with the team, surely, she will be demoted. To achieve that, Alice delivered a performance worth the role of the Wicked Witch of the West on Broadway. She chose a regional manager of a transcontinental transportation organization to be her target. At first, she was so nice and assuring that she made him believe they could build an app allowing remote control and diagnostics of trucks through GPS-tracking and a simple internet connection. She thought she would just ignore the promise, and when the team did not deliver, she could pretend that the promise was never made, making the client angry. To her surprise, her team did keep her promise and managed to implement the new feature. Who knew that they used extra new, and innovative trucks with almost fully-electric components?

Now, since her team bothered to invent something, the regional manager insisted on working with them. The new strategy, the same plan. This time she kept refusing the man's ideas.

They were too big, too small, too hard, and unachievable. Feigning incompetence seemed to be a logical approach, since the last time, they somehow managed to finish the given task. Despite what seemed reasonable, it was not the winning strategy. The team admired her ability to judge which projects were possible, and which were not. Some colleagues, fellow seniors, and managers sought her advice on long-term planning, and evaluations of the team.

How does no one see that she is not the person? What are they going to do when they find out? She needed to get away from that man and get demoted faster. Leading her towards the direction she never thought it would take. She called one of the suppliers that used the client's trucks and canceled one of their shipping containers. How is that possible? Well, she did manage to achieve all that with little to no authority, so why couldn't she now? The man on the line did not care. To be fair, it was a single man in charge of one container, meaning he would not care for reasons of cancellations. If the boss cancels, he has one less container to take care of. Alice had this convoluted thought process, whereas the manager has shipping issues, maybe he will have less time to bother her with his ideas.

The office was peaceful for a week, which was interrupted by joyful greetings from the boss. He then declared that "the team has made the company three times the profits of the last year, so bonuses would be given to everyone." Amongst the cheerful celebrations of the people, the boss quietly sat next to Alice and said "You did a great job with that transportation company. They liked our products so much; that we signed a five-year contract. Which reminded me of your vacation days. You haven't taken any since entering the company. I doubt that you are having a financial issue, so I will not take any excuses. But I guessed you might protest, so I asked around, and came to find out you like Thailand. I have been there, so I can recommend someplace that would go well with the tickets I bought for you."

She was in disbelief. Is she finally getting close to her dream? Can she maybe stay there, and never come back? She started envisioning beaches, fruits, and sunny days.

“Come on, Alice! I know you are a hard-working person. But remember, if you get sick, the company will not take care of you. So, you should relax and —”

The ring of the phone stopped him, after which he swiftly took the call, and in a couple of minutes, followed by a slow head turn towards Alice, he asked “Who canceled what?”

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