

Chapter 1

Two Weeks



Josh cruised down the country road with his foot pressed firmly on the gas pedal. He loved driving with the radio up and the windows down. He wasn't sure who enjoyed it more—him or his dog, Dharma. With her head out the window and ears flapping, she seemed to relish the smell of the fresh country air even as the strong winds battered her face. Not a care in the world, Josh thought, as he looked over at her and shook his head. She doesn't have to worry about jobs and bosses and paychecks. She doesn't have to care about things like “engagement” or “focus” or “employment.” Oh, to be so lucky.

They were miles from the city where Josh lived and worked—and far away from the challenges and concerns he faced. He wished he could just stick his head out the window and forget yesterday ever happened. He wished he could go back in time and take his father's advice. He wished he felt differently.

“I want to be you,” Josh yelled to Dharma. Her ears perked up after hearing his voice. She turned toward him,

letting her master know his words were more important than sunshine and fresh country air. Josh smiled at her. He was convinced she understood everything he said—whether they were taking a walk, going for a ride in the car, or sitting at home. She understood the creative ideas he shared while brainstorming in his “idea” room. She listened as he read books in bed and discussed life’s biggest questions with her. She put her head in his lap when he shared his innermost and greatest fears. She not only knew his thoughts, she knew what was in his heart. As Josh approached his destination, he wished she could tell him what his heart was saying.

A sign on the side of the road let him know the farm where he was headed was only a few miles away. He was looking forward to seeing his friends. They had invited him to join them for a fun day. He had never been to a corn maze before and didn’t know what to expect, but figured it had to be better than sitting at home feeling sorry for himself.

His friends knew what others did not. His life was not as perfect as it seemed. Sure, he had a great place to live, a great job with a well-respected company, and a bright future. Yet something was missing. He was no longer excited to go to work. It wasn’t that Josh hated his job. It was just that he didn’t love it anymore. And everyone knew it, including his boss, who had called Josh into his office yesterday, on a Friday of all days, to break the news.

“You’re not the same guy I hired five years ago,” his boss, Mark, had said. “You had the fire in your belly. You

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were passionate and full of ideas and energy. Now it seems you don't even want to be here anymore. What's up?"

Josh looked down at the ground, not wanting to look his boss in the eye. He knew Mark was right, but hearing him say the truth made everything more real. He felt exposed and ashamed. "I don't know," Josh said as he looked up and shook his head. "I wish I had an answer, but I don't. I'm just not feeling it lately. I don't know why. I'm just not." He wasn't sure whether he should have told the truth, but his upbringing and his own experience told him an honest answer was always the best answer. Besides, he wore the truth on his face every day, and his body language over the past year spoke volumes.

"Well, you know that passion is a big part of what we do," his boss said. "If we don't have passion, then we are like everyone else—mediocre—and that's not good enough for me, our company, or our clients."

"Am I being fired?" Josh asked. He always remembered when he was twelve years old and had broken his arm; the doctor had walked in, looked at the X-ray, then immediately grabbed his arm and made small talk. Next, without any warning—*crack*—the doctor had set his broken bone back in place. Ever since, Josh believed in getting painful or uncomfortable moments over with as quickly as possible.

"No," Mark replied, shaking his head, "I'm not ready to give up on you yet. We've invested way too much in you to just let you go, and I believe you've invested too much in us to give up now. I've seen this before, and I think you

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need a break. So here's the deal: I'm giving you two weeks. Think of it as a reverse two weeks' notice. Instead of being fired after two weeks, my hope is that you'll be rehired. Sort of like a fresh start. You have two paid weeks off to decide whether you really, truly, and passionately want to be here. If, after two weeks, you decide this is not right for you, I'll be disappointed, but at least we'll both know it's time to move on and not go through the motions any longer. It's simple. You either want to be here and give 110 percent, or you find something else you want to do that, hopefully, will light the spark you once had here."

"Deal?" Mark asked as he reached out to shake Josh's hand. "Deal," Josh replied, as he shook his boss's hand and walked out the door, wondering whether he should be cheering or crying. While most people would love a paid two-week vacation to decide their future, for Josh there was nothing more frightening.