

V

Reconciliation

I had spent almost three years in my job. I did not feel achieved and suffered some emptiness as I thought my background and potential were wasted. I spent years learning actuarial science without getting a Canadian degree or completing professional exams, which was one of my objectives. Many years before, I had also disconnected from the field that had resonated with me since childhood. I dearly missed physics, a natural passion where I mostly scored my highest marks, and I was not where I wanted to be in my life progression. Getting that far in my studies to fall that low in my life... I felt like I was a loser. Yet, since I always respected all kinds of jobs and chose to go with what I had, I was living a peaceful resignation.

However, at the beginning of the introspection depicted in chapter one, when I leaned back in my chair after repeatedly hearing the word “Truth” and after getting all the thoughts about how fear gets people to lie, I turned to myself and wondered, “Am I true? Am I true to myself?” Then, I got enraptured in my past life. I dove into the sweet moments and the bitter times. I revisited my childhood and my shame about some of its aspects. I saw my struggles to fit in and get my share of life. I got in front of my fear of being alone and the relationships where I tried to find some comfort, but that did not work. I revisited all my life, from childhood to where I was. I also noticed the moment when I turned my back on myself and fought for who I wanted to be instead of holding on to who I was first. Then, tears filled my eyes, and I started to cry. I realized I had not been true to myself for so many years. While fighting against life and trying not to be left alone, I renounced myself.

I saw how I had forsaken this “who I am.” I saw that little boy I was trying to hide. In my attempt to not be alone, I had walked away from him, leaving him in the rice culture. I saw he had been lonely without me for so many years. I saw him plowing with his clothes covered with mud, and I saw him chasing the birds all day long. I had left him there and escaped to run after things that did not match who we were. He was looking at me, and he was so sad. My heart broke, and I regretted leaving him like that for all these years. I ran to him, and I hugged him so dearly. I told him I was sorry. I showered him with love and reunited with him.

Despite all the comments about him and how he was, I carried him with me. All the comments that made him feel “abnormal” and desiring to become “normal” like the others, I heard them again. But, this time, I said, “It’s okay. That’s who I am.” I embraced this boy and decided never to leave him again. I also saw this young man lost and going through all kinds of struggles, and with a smile, I told him, “It’s fine. You did what you had to do.” Then, I forgave those who intentionally or unintentionally hurt me, and I forgave myself for those I had hurt and what I did wrong. I forgave myself for all that I had been regretting for years. After this good cry, I felt an indescribable peace deep inside me. Then, I decided I would never separate from this “who I am” anymore.

However, this decision came with consequences, and one of them was my resignation from my job. Not only did I resign, but I also set some criteria for the next job opportunities I would accept. A job is the manifestation of an agreement between two parties, the recruiter and the candidate, who respectively become the employer and the employee after the acceptance of an offer from one party by the other. Therefore, even if the recruiter, most of the time, is in a position of strength and comes with his set of criteria, it is natural that, like the recruiter, the candidate gets his own set of criteria about what job he wants and dares to decline offers that do not meet them. That’s how prosperous and sustainable professional relationships between employers and employees can be built. Indeed, an employee whose standards are unmet will potentially be looking around for an opportunity that is a better match. And an employer who does not consider his employees’ standards might face a high turnover rate.

After working in ten different places, I wanted to avoid switching employers again. Sometimes, I had chosen to leave. Other times, circumstances were not in my favor, and I often made mistakes. But, this time, I did not want to work for a paycheck anymore. My next job had to be my last one. Therefore, even though I decided to let life take its course, I still outlined the features of my next job. I defined the types of tasks I would accept and the characteristics of companies I would accept offers from. I also determined other features, including minimum benefits, vacation time, and my minimum acceptable pay rate. Then, I decided I would not accept or apply for any offer that did not fall into or exceed those criteria – a decision I could luckily afford.

Another immediate consequence of the introspection was my decision to end my marriage. As I mentioned earlier, I will avoid talking much about the details of my relationships. However, I could see no one was happy, and after assessing the situation

for over two years, I understood the reasons would stay the same. During those two years, remorse was eating away at me for the marriage. Building a family was my priority, but I did it incorrectly. I did not want to keep us in an unhappy marriage and get to the point of separation years later. We were not married at church, and I thought if the marriage was not going to work, the sooner we ended it, the better. Marriage can be very complex, and I will discuss my thoughts and insights on love and relationships in more detail later.

So, when the introspection began, my two immediate decisions were difficult. But that's what the "something" inside of me instructed me. Life is not an easy path, and decisions must be made carefully. However, my definition of "careful decisions" was no longer the same. I wanted my ex-wife to have the possibility of living a happier relationship as soon as possible, and for work, I did not worry at all, as I had a plan again. When making those difficult decisions, this time, I felt aligned with the "something" I often failed to listen to. No matter how small I had to start, I decided to dive again into entrepreneurship and move toward data science by enrolling in a certification simultaneously. So, I incorporated a business and requested admission to a university.

However, instead of data science, they suggested I pursue a certification in data analysis, which was different from what I wanted. Therefore, I focused on the steps in my business-related dream and started to deliver food. The food delivery activity allowed me a lot of flexibility in my time management, so I could work on the business project and take online data science courses at my desired pace. I loved this possibility, and after resigning, I was far from jobless. Instead, I was overly busy but worked differently. I did not care much about getting another job or not, but my decision was made about what type of job I would accept if I had to sign an offer again. I was so determined that, in this period, I kindly declined more than twenty job opportunities that did not fall into my criteria. I politely thanked the recruiters for their interest in my profile and continued not stressing about getting a job.

Yet, life often strangely seems to provide me with what I want when I do not cling and stop caring about having it. This happened with my retake of the exam to enter the business school at the Polytechnic Institute. It also seemed to be the case when I finally got my last job before immigrating and when I obtained the Canadian visa. As I said earlier, life often seems to tease me. While focused on my new business adventure, I received a message from a recruiter about an interesting data-related role at a university. The offer was exciting and perfectly matched the standards I determined, with some of

the features above my expectations. I did not hesitate to confirm my interest in joining the university's staff. I was scheduled for tests and interviews and succeeded in my application.

It was great to get the role. Even if the emptiness of not pursuing studies in physics remained, I was doing exactly one of the kinds of work I like, diving into statistics and computer tools to inform decisions. The team seemed happy to have me, and I quickly developed a fantastic cooperation with my boss, who soon told me I exceeded his expectations. I felt fulfilled and accomplished; my background fully served me, the job had exciting prospects, and the compensation was appropriate. Things started going well for me again, and I continued establishing my business, planning to keep it as a side occupation, like insurance, in case my employment situation changed. I also planned to enroll in a program at that university to complete what I had left unfinished with my withdrawal from the previous one I attended. This time, I considered studying physics – not necessarily for a job in this field, but for connecting with what had always resonated with me.

I was pleased in my new role, and this job meant a lot to me as it was related to my background and studies. I finally got a job that met my criteria and where I could stay for the rest of my career. I hoped to achieve the stability I sought without switching jobs again. However, I became concerned when we heard the university was planning to enforce a vaccination policy. I wasn't sure I could conform to it, as my decision-making process had changed entirely, and I had been through a profound interior transformation, the type of change that entirely reshapes you forever. I had met and reconciled with myself. I had also made myself promises to no longer separate from it, to be true to myself and no longer make decisions based on fear, to listen to the voice of my conscience inside of me to make sure I am always at peace with it, so I don't fall into remorse anymore. Before deciding whether to take the vaccine, I had to see what the "something within" would tell me, to listen to it and follow its directions.

I shared my concern with my boss and explained that I had been through things that made me unsure I would comply if forced with the vaccine. I explained I had experienced a deep introspection that completely changed my decision-making process. He answered, "Djoy, don't worry. I have worked here for many years, and the university does not tend to force its employees into personal decisions. I can guarantee that no one will force you to get a vaccine to keep your job. And, if that had to happen, you can be sure I will do everything I can so you don't get through such a condition." I smiled and thought, "I hope so. Let's wait and see."