

PROFESSIONAL  
**TROUBLEMAKER**  
*with* LUVVIE AJAYI JONES

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## SEASON 5, EPISODE 3

### EXPERIENCE THE VALLEY

**At this point, I felt like I was in the crazy house because surely at our big business age, we're not green-lighting product without asking price.**

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Welcome back. And if you are just tuning into this podcast, the last episode was about how I built a team over the last five years. And I gave some critical context. About why I even built the team and how it all came to be. So if you missed it, go back an episode. So otherwise let's just jump right back in.

When we left off, I was telling you how we ended the year with a deep strategy session for Awe Luv Media, my company, and promise of a fruitful 2023, where the goal was to double our revenue. And we had a plan for it. I officially had people in place who can help me run the nitty gritty day to day. And even though I was rolling some folks off the team, we had a hiring plan to replace them.

And we built a system to allow us to check in and keep track of our milestones, our projects, and more like we had put so much in place. We had SOPs, which are, uh, standards of procedures documented. We had like 20 SOPs. So I was on, yes, let's do it. Y'all it's a new day and a new dawn at Awe Luv Media.

So to kick off the year, I set three priorities for the team for the first two quarters. So from January. To the end of June, three priorities and goals that we were all going to drive towards. And we said, whatever didn't fall into these three buckets. We will deprioritize or put it on hold. Those are the rules.

All right. So the first priority make my fourth book and my first children's book. It's the same book. Little Troublemaker Makes a Mess. Make that a New York times bestseller. Okay. That was number one priority and it was coming out on May 2nd, 2023. All right. So basically managing the launch, creating the

marketing strategy and working with all the teams, my publishers, my agents, my publicists, to make sure that the book soared, that was number one, that was the number one thing we were driving towards.

Number two thing, audit, optimize and create effective and efficient systems and processes because running a business is not just about the great idea you have. It's about how you're able to execute. And for me, even though I am a creative, I'm very pragmatic, right? Like, so my feet are on the ground. So what are the systems and software that we use and are any of them creating bottlenecks, remove what doesn't work, create what we need, fill whatever gaps, automate whatever we can so we're not doing.

Tedious things and spending hours a day doing tedious things that, we could just set and forget. So that was really important because how much time do we waste doing the things because we haven't optimized the ways we're doing it. So that was really critical. And then number three, probably the most critical because it speaks to the health of the business, being able to create, generate, and optimize revenue streams outside of my speaking.

Number three. Again, create, generate, and optimize revenue streams outside of my speaking. Because once again, remember my speaking did not depend on who's on my team, because I got inbounds left and right. I'll tell y'all every year, I think I get about 500 speaking inquiries. And this has been true since 2017.

And I do maybe in a big 30, right? So. I get inbound speaking, did not depend on my team. So this priority was critical because I needed to stand the business up outside of me. So I wanted to do a book course and guides and focus on this affiliate strategy. And the team's job was to execute those things.

All right, so three priorities, like building my team a few years before, like activating all these monetization strategies has been the point. Because again, if too much of my revenue was from speaking, that means the company is propped up by me, literally showing up somewhere. That's a lot of pressure.

That's a risky business. That is not a diversified portfolio. That is a setup for failure. No one company that aims to be sound in its model should depend on the literal presence of one person. I mean, across the board. So if you're listening to this. That's one tip to hold on to. So yeah, I hired a team. So my company can grow beyond myself and I command a big number as a leading speaker, like low key y'all.

I get paid like a white dude, which amen. All right. Pay equality, but that's a privilege that I don't take for granted. And again, if most of my company's money is from speaking and writing, I could have a team of one and still make the exact same amount. So what do I need them for? Now, let me further rewind.

I hired an executive coach in the beginning of 2021 to work with me and my team because I know there were many growth opportunities for me as a leader. Managing people is not easy. I don't love it. Unconscious leadership calls for no ego in understanding that you need to continue to get better at it.

And I will give myself one piece of credit. I ask for help. I know. My flaws, I know my weaknesses and I try as best as I can to either hire for it or get better at it. Okay. So three things I knew were my weak spots as a leader. And I knew that for me to build the business that I want to build, I have to get better at them.

So three things, one delegation, All my years of working solo or with just one person and being a type A Capricorn. Okay. It means it's not easy for me to delegate. And I know I am so capable that I know that I can do most things. Well, I also like to move fast. So I find it hard to pause and pass on a task that I might have to teach how it needs to get done.

So I needed to learn that delegation saves me time. It lets me spend more time on the things that are in my zone of genius. And allows more productivity overall. Right. So that's weak spot that I was like, I got to get better at. And I did squirreling. I call it squirreling. You know how squirrels like go like, Ooh, I'm a visionary leader who knows how to build.

I have a lot of ideas and many of them are actually good, but I cannot execute them all at once. And again, I call this squirreling because it's like, you go, Ooh, Ooh. And I'm like. Finding new acorns to look at and my head and my focus can constantly turn. So being clear, what my priorities are was important.

And knowing that any additional ideas needed to be set to be done later without constantly chasing shiny things. So these are things that I was very clear. I had growth opportunities in and then three given feedback. Here's the thing. I am a very straightforward person. So I would say like, I don't like how that was done.

Please fix it. And for me, that shorthand means I don't waste time, but for others in my field too blunt. So I needed to be more of the compliment sandwich person. So in working with my executive coach for two years, I actually did

become a much better leader. I delegated more with more trust, I gave Claire priorities, direction and guardrails.

I gave direction on the why, right? Giving them the purpose. So they know what the mission is. They know why I've decided on moving a particular direction while also giving freedom to my team to come up with their own workflow, deadlines and ways to execute, I even gave up control of my email. Inbox, which was huge.

Like my chief of staff was literally inside my inbox, like had my password every day, answering emails. That's the equivalent of an entrepreneur walking across cold. Like that's a trust exercise for real. So. I put all these things in place and I'm telling you all these different things because I came into that year really confident about all the ways in which I had grown, all the ways in which I had set the company up for success and was excited for what was to come.

I built the company's project management tools. We were using Slack as our main team communication software. Base camp as our project management tool, zoom for our meetings, loom for like recording quick information that did not require a meeting. We had weekly meetings.

We had quarterly reviews, my company's core values, which I talked about in the last episode, or something that we talked about regularly. **So honestly, who I am in public. Is who I am as a boss. Like no surprises over here. I have high expectations, but I am empathetic. I don't expect perfection, but I do ask for excellence. Now, excellence does not mean you never make mistakes, but excellence means consistently you do great work, even good work, like where I don't have to think you're going to be janky, right? Like. That does not mean perfection anyway, and I require radical transparency.**

Like literally it is number one in our core values. If your life is on proverbial fire and you can't make a deadline, just say that, but don't not do it, get asked about it and then say, Oh yeah, I couldn't get to it. And here's why I need you to communicate. I was dedicated and am still dedicated to building the company that I would want to work for, where we do impactful work.

We work hard, but we also know we can show up as our full selves. And even have some fun as we do it, like meetings where you can get things done and laugh. Those are a win to me. So in January, 2023, we hired three new people for the three positions we had let go of folks from, and I'd given hiring and firing power to my director of operations and my chief of staff.

My role in the hiring was to do the final interview. And unless you have a major red flag, by the time you get to me, you're 90 percent about to get a yes. Okay. So we kicked off 2023 with director of operations, chief of staff, junior assistant, content coordinator, content assistant, marketing assistant, and marketing strategist.

Okay. So we still had seven people internally. And we had. The strategic calendar for the year. We had the clear priorities. We had the plan and the people. And again, my leads were empowered to be more autonomous and make more decisions, knowing the mission, the path, the goals,

things began to go nuts. I'm telling you, like, I don't even have explanations for a lot of it. I still reflect on it. I'm still like, what could I have done different? But I want you to keep certain things in mind. I had a brand new book that was coming out in May, a children's book, my first children's book I had never played in this space.

And I was like, we're going to have to come up with some magic because it's a different ball game from, you know, dropping a big essay collection. Our goal was to make double what we had brought in, in 2022. And remember, we were already a seven figure company. So that means we're making, we're supposed to make a lot more money.

That required action that we had created plans for to be executed alongside that bookmarketing strategy for Little Troublemaker. and we had new members of the team who are new, like three. So our challenge was to build new culture, get them acclimated, get our work done with the deadlines we had set and do it all efficiently. So we're doing weekly team meetings. We were creating execution plans for each priority with their matching deadlines. And I'm telling the team to make sure they tell me what they need from me. Even outside of workflow. So do y'all need me for guidance? Are you clear on your why's? Do you need more space or even systems? Do you need brain breaks?

Please tell me what you need. Otherwise I'm going to get out your way and do what I got to do. That is what I asked of them. In any meetings I was in, I need you to be open with me. Oh, oh, I thought I told y'all about my core values last episode. Okay. Let me tell you about the, what the company core values are.

Okay. I thought I told y'all last episode. It's okay. I'm gonna tell you now. So we have eight core values and Before you work for my company even on your job description These core values are there when you are being interviewed. We talk

to core values On your first day, we talk about it and then I also bring it up in certain meetings, right?

so the core values for all of media, number one, we operate with radical transparency and honesty. Two, we create elevated work, which removes barriers to understanding. Three, we operate in ways that affirms ours and others gifts for we are forever students who are constantly learning and growing, even at what we're already good at five, we show up authentically as ourselves in all ways, six, we asked you to challenge us and yourself every day.

Opposing viewpoints are valued and thoughtful disagreement is encouraged. Number seven, operating with the end in mind, we are proactive and strategic thinkers who know that planning prevents piss poor performance. So we aren't left constantly reacting to things we could have foreseen. Eight team is a verb.

We collaborate and support each other without shame or judgment. I'm giving you all this context to show you the ways in which I had invested time and energy into the foundational pieces of my company. And when you start working for me, you agree to honor those core values. I'm not just an ideas person.

I'm a pragmatic leader who deeply values structure and frameworks. I'm a visionary who can build is what got me here. So back to January, 2023, everything's in place. Everyone's in place. We got new team members. We got a tight structure. So what in the actual hell happened? Like truly it. It had me feeling like I was in the twilight zone, y'all, like I could not understand how we had done so much pre planning, so much intentional strategy, so much growth.

I thought, and then things just started going to hell in a hand basket. And I felt like a mad person because I was like, this is above and beyond my pay grade and understanding. And I was like, you know what, maybe there's something spiritual attached to this, but I'll get to that much later. Maybe in different episodes because yeah, anyway, people start messing up left and right.

So what starts happening first, there was this weird lack of productivity. We will have a plan. We will have a deadline, but somehow none of the deadlines would be met. And I'd ask what happened? And they'd say something else popped up that they needed to address. That's something else was typically them addressing a mistake they made that they had to fix.

That's the other thing that started happening a lot. Mistakes like left and right emails would have typos in them. People would be addressed wrongly. Social

media posts would be pixelated all sorts. They were running after mistakes. So they couldn't be productive because they were constantly fixing something that they did wrong.

And here's the thing. **When things start going wrong, you got to start with yourself first, especially when the company's led by you. And like I said before, you got to start taking the blame before they can take a blame, right? So I started asking myself and them, what is causing our continuous missed deadlines?**

**Is our workload too great? Do you need something off your plate? Is everything on your daily to do list tied to our top three priorities? If it's not, is there anything on your plate that can be deprioritized? What do you need in general? Do you need more time? Do you need time blocks? Do you need a break?**

**Have you taken lunch? What do you need from me, your leader?**

Specifically, do you need one on one time? Do you need something adjusted? What do you need? Like I kept on asking, what do you need? And I was even asking myself that. And I was like, I just need people to do what they say they're going to do.

That's what I needed in that moment. And I would ask my leads to challenge me on my decisions. And to help us put in place, what could be causing limiting factors? What could be causing mistakes? What could be causing deadline? Are we moving too fast? Like y'all let me know. Cause I know I move fast. That might be a toxic trait of mine, but y'all let me know.

I said, be honest. I had meetings with my leads specifically every week. So when I see us falling behind on guides that were supposed to post for people to be able to buy. To help them. what's going on with the content y'all do we have the marketing plan, what, what's happening? I would just be sitting there like y'all tell me what's going on on the team level.

I even excused myself from some team meetings in order to show much more trust and to make sure I wasn't creating chaos or additional work. And I was like, do y'all need me? They'll say, no, I'm like, cool, cool, cool, cool. And I would say, report back to me. Y'all know the mission. Y'all know the why. You tell me the route we need to take to get there.

We can collaborate on the final path, but give me something to react to. We have a company policy called Second Eyes. It's the idea that anything that goes out

externally, a newsletter, a social media posts, a deck needs to have one more set of eyes on it beyond the person who created it. This is what we mean when we say team is a verb.

It means nothing lives or dies with one person, team collaboration. Watch my back and I'll watch yours. Y'all. By February, 2023, because of all the mistakes that were being perpetually made, we were on fourth eyes four, meaning the team stopped trusting each other to the point where they weren't sure if the one person who looked at their work caught everything, which may means everything from newsletters to decks took three times as long to do decks would be taken three weeks to finish.

And I'd be like, where is it? Like, where, why is this deck taking three weeks? At the end of February, we had to make our first 2023 fire. She was a team member who'd be MIA for four hours of the workday. She was one of the marketing people, marketing assistant, and her deliverables were riddled with errors constantly.

She was new and in her probational period. So it was an easy fire, but it was too frustrating. I remember one day I asked her to put up something on my social media, on Instagram, on Twitter, on LinkedIn and Facebook. Four hours went by and she was nowhere to be found. And I was like, um, this post was supposed to go up hours ago.

She going to pop up at 4 45. Talking about something. Oh, I was just doing research on it. Ma'am, I gave you the caption and the graphic was ready. What are we talking about? Long story short, she got fired after one month,

God bless. So March began. It was time to get very serious about Little Troublemaker's launch because we had two months before the book dropped and it's go time. And if you know me and anything about my book launches two months out, we go in. It is time to execute a deep editorial and deep content strategy.

Right now. Remember revenue streams, it is March the team had not finalized or activated one revenue stream at this point from the plan that we made what was supposed to have already happened at that point. We're supposed to have actually dropped a guide to help entrepreneurs figure out what are the critical pieces of systems that they needed, which would have affiliate links in it.

They could not get it done. We had not done it. So at this point, I'm officially like, **am I the drama? Because if the team is dropping the ball this much, it**



**must be something I'm doing because I can't, because when things go wrong, I do internalize first. So I tap in on a couple of my mentors and I tell them what's been happening.**

**I go back to our team gardener. Who is also a mentor of mine. And I say, yo, check me, where am I failing as a boss? Am I not checking in enough? Am I giving too much work? Am I being unrealistic with my expectations? And one thing I love about my village is that they will tell me the truth. Even when it ain't in my favor, I surround myself with Professional Troublemakers who don't take my shit on purpose.**

And one piece of feedback I kept getting was, honestly, you need to be firing people much quicker. Meanwhile, my toxic trait, which my therapist has already told me multiple times, is giving people too much grace. Because I really am rooting for folks to win. And also because it's the grace that I wish more people would give me.

So then I over give the grace, right? And then you add on top of that, the fact that hiring is a nightmare and I was over it already. I know I was over the hiring fire already. Mind you, I had no clue. Yeah, I had just started. Okay. So the mistakes continued without excuse or real reason. And people would make mistakes and they'll just be like, Oh, sorry, but then they won't do anything to fix it.

So what started happening was the culture of the team became make mistakes, there are no consequences. it got sloppy and that was my fault for allowing it to continue without real corrective measures. However, I didn't have the brain space for it. I gave it to my leads to handle, but not much moved there.

Like I was, I didn't have the brain space to also now be the one giving out consequences. I put people in place for that. My leads would report back to me after the fact, and we chat about what happened and they'd say, they talked to whoever the team member was. March also presents with super chaos as that is a really busy month for me, for speaking, for traveling, for conferences.

So I'm usually gone at least half of March from home and y'all in March due to calendar errors from my chief of staff and my junior assistant that we, had. I almost missed three flights, three flights. Okay. I remember one day sitting in my hotel room, it was three 20 and I was just casually on the phone and I was like, yeah, I have a flight to cash in a couple of hours around like four or something.

The person I was on the phone with was like, wait for some, that's like in 50 minutes. And I was like, wait, wait, wait. Oh my God. Like protocol. For me is whenever I have a flight to catch or anywhere to be, my admin team is supposed to reach out to me, tap on me. Hey, your car's downstairs. You're ready to go.

They had not reached out to me. They had completely forgotten that I had this, I had to call an Uber because I didn't even know where my car was. The car that was scheduled for me. I didn't even know where it was. I called an Uber, got to the airport and ran through that airport. And I was the last person on the plane.

I would have missed it. Had five minutes passed. I would have missed it. That happened three times in March. So let me take a deep breath here. At this point, it's the end of quarter one. We were supposed to have released , one paid resource. We were supposed to finalize a few partnership contracts.

None of it had happened. We were already 500, 000 behind the goal we had set. Okay. Already I stumbled through March. I was pissed for a lot of it, but I just had to keep moving because I didn't have time between stepping on a stage between being at a conference. I just, I stumbled through March and at the end of it, I had a call with my finance team because again, none of the revenue streams had happened.

That we had planned for quarter one had actually happened. We were in the red for the year so far because once again, the only revenue that was coming in was from my writing and from my speaking. That is how we were kept afloat. And at this point, we were spending more every month than we were making.

And it was mostly on my team. So my CFO was like, if we do not bring in one additional dollar, Like if we don't book one more piece of business, the company would be bankrupt by the end of June. This is March. Okay. like we were literally tracking towards bankruptcy. Like if I did not book one more speaking engagement, if one more check was not slotted to come in.

Awe Luv Media would have 0 in less than three months. Y'all it was red alert time. I was officially the closest to panicking Like I remember just sitting at my desk with my face in my hands, just being like, how the hell did we get here? And here's the thing I was working harder than I ever have. I was working harder and longer hours than I had in a long time. Like at this point. So again, I'm leading and making sure we're tracking what's going on.

Towards Little Troublemaker. I'm making sure that my publishers are happy. I'm making sure that I'm getting on those stages that I'm being hired to get on and

getting paid a lot of money on and killing. Like what's interesting is that March. I remember. It will be five minutes before I get on stage and I'll be correcting an error with my team.

Meanwhile, I'm supposed to be in the zone, right? I'm supposed to be like preparing my mind to present in front of thousands of people and give them all this value and impact. Meanwhile, I am in my phone texting them like, Hey, you just sent an email that I noticed you just sent it to the wrong person. And I'd put my phone in my pocket and I'd jump on stage and I'd kill, like, I'm so thankful to the gifts that God gave me the gift of being able to show up, even when I feel frazzled and still give excellence, I do not take that for granted because that is what saved me.

I would literally be stepping on stage. Where 20 seconds before I just had to tell somebody fix that and I'd kill and my Speakers agents who come back and be like, yo, they loved you so much. Oh my gosh. They want you they want you back. Meanwhile, I jump off stage and get right back into fixing.

Whatever's happening and making sure everything's okay I'm good and make sure everybody else is good. And there are some days where I hadn't even eaten yet because my admin team who's supposed to be in charge of making sure I have food didn't make sure I have food before I stepped on that stage. So it'd be 4 p. m. And I'd be having my first meal, right? So all of this is happening. Y'all. Can you imagine? How high my cortisol had to be like my stress levels through the roof. So when I talked to my CFO and he's like, yeah, we're tracking towards bankruptcy. Fam.

So I took a deep breath and I said, all right, we are officially on a revenue run. Find me some money. Like I had talked, I talked to my leads and I kept on checking with them and I said, you know what, okay, it is my actual job to find us money. So I added that to my plate knowing that in this point, in this moment to depend on other people to find me money for sure would not work out well.

So I put it back on my back. Again, nothing has been taken off my plate. I just added this giant thing onto my plate. Meanwhile, with the team, I checked in with them. What do we need to do to plug some holes? I was giving my team TED Talks. In meetings like legit to y'all. I trust in you. I believe in you.

You got this. I know you've been making a lot of mistakes. I want y'all to start trusting each other again because I noticed that you're not trusting each other, you know, in the moments when I'm not showing up as my best self, I need y'all

to let me know. But what do you need? Like I was giving Ted talks in meetings because I was like, I need them to what is happening.

I was being my most empathetic self because I was like, maybe life is lifing, but like y'all life can't life and I can't make payroll cause y'all not doing the work. I need you to do show up for me. Cause I'm trying to show up for you. And I'd be talking to my entrepreneur friends, girl. It was, I don't know.

So when April begins in Little Troublemaker's one month for being out, we're in go mode for that. While I'm trying to find us more money. While my schedule for press and events is ramping up while I'm watching critical mistakes being made on my behalf. The junior assistant we had, who was again, new as of January, she was sending emails, addressing folks with the wrong name.

And then, and then y'all, and then there was an incident that almost cost me 30,000. Because one of my leads greenlit a project to move forward that was attached to Little Troublemaker without asking for a budget. Like it was our influencer box for it. And before it went to production, the invoice was sent, of course.

And I see the bill for 30,000 and I'm like, wait, wait, wait, wait, wait, wait. 30,000 y'all want me to write a check for 30,000 where homes for, for what? And the budget we had allocated was a fourth of that. Okay. A fourth. So I go to the lead and I say, why would you not ask for a final budget to the proposal they sent us?

She goes, well, I figured. It would cost what it did last year. So I said, so you didn't ask for an actual number and you just assumed that it will cost the same thing you did last year. **At this point, I felt like I was in the crazy house because surely at our big business age, we're not green-lighting product without asking price.**

**Help me understand You see that the Nigerian had to come out real quick, help me understand why in fact, I was even on a trip as it was happening. I was about to go on a stage and I said, wait a minute. I just got a \$30,000 invoice. Who, who post to pay that?** And as that is happening, our content coordinator was coming up missing for chunks of the workday.

And the content plans we have, we're not being executed. Social media posts were not going up. thankfully I had a good relationship with the vendor. And I was like, Hey, can you cut this down by 75%? Please send me an invoice for 75 percent and cut out everything you was going to do and get it down to the basis

because I ain't got it. I ain't got it. Yo, we ain't got it. And again, this vendor loves me has, I've worked with them a thousand times.

They were so understanding, cut that down. Thank you. Appreciate you. Then we were running a pretty big sponsorship train for Little Troublemaker, getting people to buy copies for classrooms across the country. So kids who might not get a chance to buy it, get to own it at no cost to them, no cost to their teachers, no cost to their parents.

So I was getting my network to buy books for classrooms. All of this. While I'll be checking people's to do lists in our project management system. And I'd be seeing outdated and overdue tasks with no status updates. Even my leads weren't keeping their stuff updated and they're supposed to model the work.

If y'all not keeping your stuff updated, how's everybody else going to do it? Okay. My close friends who also run their own companies. We were talking every day. Cause again, I'm like, **am I the drama? Like y'all got to tell me what has happened because I am confused. I am perplexed. I am aghast. I ain't got words no more.**

**I don't have no more strategy for nobody. I ain't got no more pivots. I didn't have it for them. And what I really wanted to hear is Luvvie, you messing up as a leader because it would at least give me some explanation, then I could fix it.** The thing I do know, we had a lot on our plate that much. I know we had a lot on our plate, but I would check in constantly with the team and say, what's your workload today?

How's that looking? So even if we do have a lot on our plate, let's take it day by day. Let's take it week by week, month by month. Right? You see the mountain in front of you. Yes. It looks hard to climb. But just take it task by task, just finish one task and go to the next. I wanted to hear that I had given them too much, but again, I had seven people on this team.

Everybody who I showed our workload was like, yeah, it's a lot, but it's not like intermountable. It's not like out of scope. And also it's only a lot for this small amount of time, because also. Once Little Troublemaker launches that moves that out the way.

So I was putting out fires. I was trying to figure out how to pivot in real time while managing my own workload that was not any, any smaller because of the team while fixing mistakes. And again, the number one priority for Q1 and two

was a success of Little Troublemaker. So I had to barrel ahead, but also now the number one thing that was on my head.

Was a fact that we needed to make money. So where we are at the beginning of April, my first children's book comes out in a month. This is the most important time for pre orders. My team is operating in a chaos cycle. They're being chaos, gremlins being unproductive, making mistakes. And they're, they've eroded my trust so much and they've eroded their trust in each other.

And I just got news that like, so far we were spending more than we were making that year. And those salaries and benefits were draining our company bank account to the point that we're in a red zone and a risk to go bankrupt. My stress was stressed. Okay. Like. All of this while I'm also trying to be a good wife, a good friend, a good daughter, a good sister, and drink water, stay hydrated, go to therapy.

And it was a lot.

Two weeks. Into April, we fired two more members of the team for individually making critical errors that I had to rectify because they were embarrassing. They were front facing and even I couldn't give them an excuse to why it happened. So that was our junior assistant. And our content coordinator.

Remember junior assistant who manages the company inbox, messing up left and right. Yes. Then content coordinator who was randomly disappearing for hours at a time and content was barely being posted. If I wasn't posted it. Yeah. Because now these mistakes were at risk of damaging my reputation to keep them on was to continue to punish myself.

So now we have three people left. We have director of operations, chief of staff. And my content assistant, Little Troublemaker comes out in two weeks. And I just had to fire two more people and my press tour begins. So on May 2nd, the book comes out. I'm doing hella press. Good Morning America, Hoda and Jenna, Tamron Hall, WGN.

I'm in New York for the week in between appearances. I was working, answering emails, double checking my schedule, making sure my cars were set because at this point I didn't trust it. Anybody to have anything for me. So during that launch week, one of my leads made an error that had I not caught it would have been so harmful and detrimental to me.

And I realized that it was officially untenable to keep her on. I finished a press hit and I gave this person notice that they have seven days to wind down their work. And they will no longer work for all of media. I fired somebody in the middle of my book launch, like the week that that's how bad it had gotten.

Okay. And now I'm down to two people. The only person I was not upset at, at this point was my content assistant who had been with me for two years and was doing her part. She kept her head down. She got her things done. And honestly, she was doing my content coordinator's job. And at one point she helped tap in on some of my admin stuff.

A lot. I am at a conference on May 11th, 2023, and at 5 p. m. Eastern time, I got a phone call from my editor and my agent, and I stepped out of the session that I was in, and they told me that *Little Troublemaker Makes a Mess*. Was number three on the children's list for the New York times bestseller list.

And y'all, I sobbed like I sobbed. It was because I was overwhelmed. But I was so grateful. I was so deeply grateful and I was just overcome with emotion because I did it. This number one priority that I set in spite of all the hiccups, the stress, the complete chaos that I was around in spite of how little I was sleeping while convicting myself and feeling like I was failing at CEOing.

In spite of how easy it was for it to not happen, in spite of all the ways in which I felt like I was being sabotaged for it not to happen, in spite of all the hurdles, me making the New York times best selling list for the fourth time with this book that honestly was helping me re-parent myself that like was healing certain parts of me that I didn't even realize with this book that in the middle of my hardest, hardest time, maybe ever.

It was like, God giving me a wink that was like, I got you. I know it's hard right now, but I got you. I know you can't figure out what's going on, but I got you. It felt like a cosmic and divine hug because I needed it. Like I, I needed that. I really needed that win, right. In spite of me being afraid for the future of my company.

I did it. I put that thing on my back and I dragged it to the finish line and God said, I got you. I won't let this fall. Like my great God, you hear me? I just, I was whipped. I was bruised. I was battered. I felt beat up, but I needed that win like *Little Troublemaker* hitting the times list. I, it did something for me.

It really kind of like, it gave me the energy that I need to keep moving. It gave me the energy that I need to keep moving. And at that conference, accelerate

her, my good friend, Kim Blackwell presented me with a cake. Cause she was like, I knew you were going to do it. Cause she had known some of my struggles.

All right. felt in that moment, so loved and protected in spite of all the foolishness that was happening. So yeah. So yeah, for the rest of May, I met with my CFO being down. To two people gave our money a little bit more breathing room, but it wasn't a sigh of relief. I just bought myself time and once May ended, I took a deep breath a little bit in June, just to like, you know what, let me just take my foot off the gas.

And at the end of June, I made my final fire. Again, we only had two people left. I fired my other lead. Balls were being dropped on a project I had finally booked. I finally booked us something. And she just didn't even manage it. Plans were not being made. And at this point there was no one else to blame for mistakes.

Like the buck stops here. you don't have anyone else to point to that it was their work to do that they didn't do. So I made that fire and I was down to one person. On my internal team, my content assistant who had worked for me for two years, she was the person who held steady and put her head down and got work done in the midst of the chaos that was happening.

When she made mistakes, there were minimal and they weren't repeated. And she was willing to help anyone out at any time. She was reliable, dependable, and committed. She held it down in so many moments and I was so grateful for her. And I remember throughout, even as we're firing different people, I would stay in conversation with her and I would tell her why, just so she also didn't feel like she was, disposable, right?

Like I was letting her know throughout, like, Hey, we're going to let go of this person. Here's why. Just so she didn't feel like, Hey, if I'm doing a good job, am I still going to be get fired? I stayed in constant comms with her. Just so she knew that I still trusted her. So yeah, in the beginning of the year, I had seven people internally.

And now I was down to one and it was the end of June, six months. Okay. So that began the need to rebuild my company and my team almost from scratch while generating enough revenue to pay myself and my Lone Ranger. It was a crumbling. It was a crumbling. And honestly, I felt every single effect of it. My stress was at an all time high.



I was incredibly irritable. My anxiety was through the roof. I was sleeping like shit. Like I might sleep for six hours and I'd wake up. I feel like I only took a 15 minute nap and my confidence was lower than it had been. I felt like I had failed. I was confused. I was dejected and burned out, not even regular burnout.

Like I was burnt to a crisp, just flailed. I had nothing left. You know, that empty battery emoji you're picturing it right now. Yes, that was me. they talk about like, don't pour from a cup that's empty. I was scraping the bottom of my cup, all my years of working on building the company and the team.

It was like two steps forward and four steps back. And on top of that, what really hurt was like my ability to trust people. Took a great hit personally and professionally, whatever trust issues I already had was now 15 out of 10 and I'd be in therapy trying to work it through and I'm just like, it was hard for me to reconcile being able to trust people and watching all the ways in which my trust had been eroded.

And trying to still balance that piece. your girl was not doing good, but I knew I needed to rebuild. I knew I needed to rebuild. I knew I was kind of like, it was the valley moment. And I think every hero's journey needs a valley moment. It was absolutely mine. And I knew it was happening in the moment.

I just knew. That I needed to get out of the valley. I wasn't sure how it was going to happen. I knew I could not quit. Quitting was not an option at all. At no point. I knew I had to rebuild, but I was very clear that I was experiencing a valley moment that I would need to dig my way out of.

So yeah, that, That was, well, no, the first half of 2023. So I just wanted to tell y'all all of that because I feel like it's important for us to get into the nitty gritty. It's easy to cliff notes that, but I wanted to break it down for you to really understand and take you through. I mean, even that, of course, I still left out a lot, but you know, you got my gist.

All right, so on the next episode, I decided to bring one of the characters in the great firing to the table. Y'all somebody who was in it with me. Y'all remember the HR consultant? I've been talking about the team Gardner who I hired. Who showed me what was happening in my business and suggested that I fire three of my team members.

Yeah. Her name is Sally Thornton and she is an amazing, amazing HR professional who my mentor, Lisa Stone, introduced to me and Sally has become a business mentor and a friend. So tune in next week because I'm going

to be in conversation with her because I want her to give y'all an honest take on what went down.

Including what she thought about my performance as a leader, as all this chaos was happening. Like Sally knows she can tell the truth. She can tell y'all if I was being raggedy and I probably was at certain points, but I wanted her to also come to the table to talk about what went wrong from her perspective, what we did to adjust.

And also I want her to give all of us tips and insights into how to build proper teams. Like this is her job. So I'm excited for that episode because she's really going to be a great bookend to talk about that crazy experience. And then after that, I'm going to tell you really how I've been able to rebuild the company.

So tune in on the next episode. It's going to be good.

Let me know if you've experienced a year, like I just described, a lot of people said they have. I want to hear from you, especially after all this business and tea, I just spilled. Go to [Luvvie.org/Podcast](https://Luvvie.org/Podcast). There's a form there where you can reach me with any thoughts you have. On these episodes, like send me an email about these episodes yeah, man, you know, send me any thoughts you have about this episode on the socials share with anybody who needs to hear, because I think people see me and one of the things that people were saying last year.

Was that man, you making it all look good. You, we did not know. I know I did make it look good. I think my commitment to my name, my reputation, my own, standards for myself, refuse to let me show the madness publicly. So as I am looking like I'm killing it publicly in terms of like. Y'all didn't know my social media was still going on as normal.

You know, I was still writing as normal. I was still giving y'all good energy behind the scenes. I was out here tussling, fighting for my life, y'all. yeah, I made it look good, but I think we got to tell these truths. We got to talk about these gritty moments because we need to understand that that's not where our story ends.