

## **HANDLE TIME** by LINCOLN PARK

ISBN 978-0-6152-1518-1; 196 pages

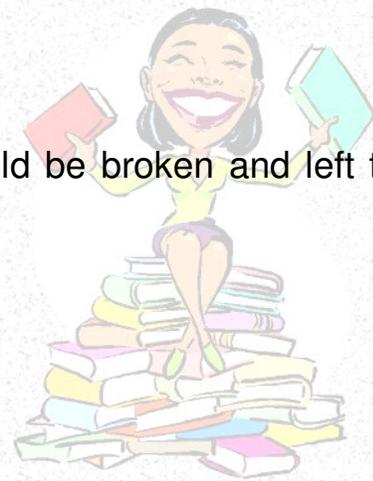
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This book begins with a *Digital Banker* named *Chase*, on a stretcher; being hauled out of the *DELSTAR BANK* call center like a felled racehorse. As we leave Chase in the hospital emergency room with morphine and self-pity as her momentary sidekicks, we begin our exploration of the fantastic events which hinted at the formation of such personal and professional humiliation.

Nine months earlier, Chase, and several other individuals in the town of Banfield, MO; each decided to apply for jobs at the brand new, *DELSTAR BANK* call center. From the day they walked in the door of the severe, stone building and began training for positions as *Digital Bankers*, Chase; along with her team of unlikely comrades, became engulfed in a unique, impersonal culture of quality performance markers and powerpointed platitudes. Through their trials and tribulations, this dozen finds out in the end, that the *DELSTAR* call center environment provides its workers with more than just a bi-weekly paycheck. It was also the place where hearts,



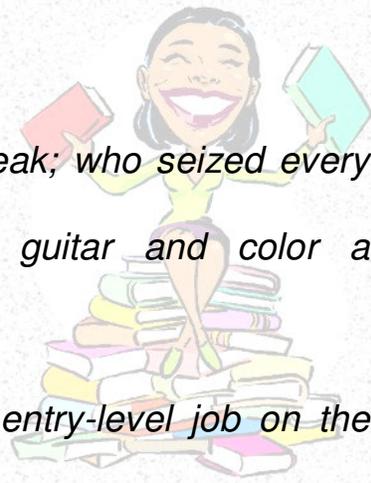
spirits, careers and personal aspirations could be broken and left to rot like so many eggs.



When she started at *DELSTAR*, Chase and her classroom cohorts were looking for financial stability; job security and a prestigious position that would help them all, raise the bar on their thankless, lower-middle class standard of living. So, they thought they could live with the abuses of callous call-in customers and the back-breaking dictates of marginalizing managers. Instead, they would quickly discover the heartbreak of not knowing if their jobs were safe, or had become last quarter's loss-column statistic.

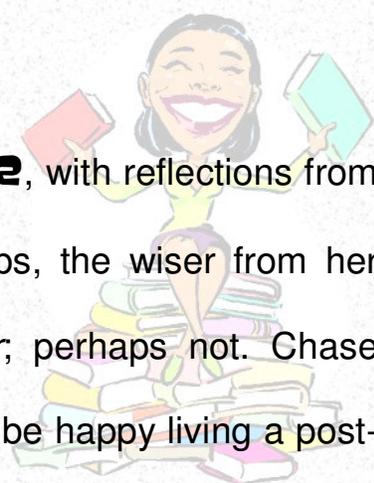
Some examples of *DELSTAR'S* quirky, clock-punching ilk are listed below:

- **Alexandra** was a fool. She lost a job with comprehensive health coverage; chasing after a man who left her with one child and pregnant with another.



- **Cookie** was a fat, yet bewitching fret-freak; who seized every opportunity she could to play bass guitar and color a conversation with sexual innuendoes.
- **Rachelle** was determined to keep her entry-level job on the *DELSTAR* floor; even if it meant foregoing promotions to higher-paying positions. Her undying quest was to prove to herself – and, to the lousy sonofabitch who walked out on their 23-year marriage -- that she could do more with her life than ring up cigarettes, six-packs and lotto tickets at the corner convenience mart. Only, she was too unskilled and unmotivated to do much else.

Other colleagues from Chase's *Digital Banker* training class at *DELSTAR BANK* add comic relief to the book's chapters and poignancy to the plot; as they try to figure out ways to keep themselves afloat in the call center's vacuous vessel of VoIP. This bunch of necessary misfits will do whatever it takes to survive a work life which has been crafted under the auspices of unforgiving, *return-on-investment* metrics. Faced with such obtuse odds, the dozen get desperate to survive the demands of the customer-support worklife; with several of them falling through the cracks.



At last, we close the book, **HANDLE TIME**, with reflections from the opening character, Chase. She is perhaps, the wiser from her idiosyncratic experience as a *Digital Banker*, perhaps not. Chase demonstrates uncertainty as to if she will truly be happy living a post-call center life; but seems to justify her doubts away in a brazen and absolutely *sensational* epilogue! As for the others from her training class; we can only imagine what new, digital, databased behemoth will befall the balance of their delicate, disaffected lives in the years to come.

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