



The Comfortable Living Checklist

Don't confuse having a career with having a life.

~Hillary Clinton

I found myself sailing through the economic crisis. Of course, I couldn't ignore the bad news shouting at me from every front, but on my front things were pretty comfortable. I was young, but I owned my home, and had a good job and no additional debt.

I must credit my parents with any monetary common sense I might have. If left to my own devices, I would have never understood the value of being debt-free over owning Louis Vuitton luggage, which I would most likely never use.

One beautiful day, I showed up for work, where I had just been promoted. I was right in the middle of training a new girl, when my boss asked to talk to me for a second. After that conversation, you can effectively cross "had a good job" off my comfortable living checklist. No warning. In fact, just the month before I had received my fifth Employee of the Month award. I was speechless and so was everyone else. Seven of us were cut from my department that day. Later, I would discover that there were thousands of cuts company-wide. I worked at a bank. A failing one.

For a week solid, I lay in bed. Blinds closed. Sweatpants on. I'm not even sure if I showered. I watched every movie I owned. Twice. My other recently unemployed and un-showered friends would come over and we'd lie in bed together, while eating chocolate and Doritos.

They were the only two things we could easily consume without exerting any effort. One week turned into a month. The depression that overcame me wasn't merely because of money, although as a single homeowner that was a concern. My depression was a combination of many different things.

When something like this happens to you, it's natural to ask why. I reviewed all my work accomplishments. I thought about how I had been a top performer every month since I had been hired and about how they gave me the highest rating of anyone on my review. What had I done wrong? What could I have done better? I had no performance problems, no warnings, and worst of all no clue.

The problem with this kind of worrying and speculation is that it will drive you mad. The truth is that sometimes we search for a logical explanation in a situation that can't be understood. The only way to move past it is to have confidence in the job you did as an employee and understand that you are a victim of an unfortunate circumstance. It doesn't make you any less of a person or undeserving of another job. It's a chapter closed and you must begin to write a new one.

Speaking of writing, with all of the extra time on my hands, I reunited with the long lost love of my life: writing. It has been the only thing I have loved to do for as long as I can remember. Unfortunately, we always tend to make time for everything except what we love. Funny how that works. Truth be told, I had hated my previous job. It stifled every bit of my creativity and left me mentally exhausted at the end of the day. Now that my mind was free from stress, I had so many creative ideas I couldn't even keep up with them.

I decided to pursue writing as an actual job, given the fact that finding employment in Illinois was pretty futile. I designed a website and applied for writing jobs. I started getting more and more clients. It occurred to me that with some hard work I might be able to make a living doing what I love. What in the world? Who does that? So there I was, three months after the sky caved in, thinking about how incredibly blessed I was. And how this never would have happened had I not lost my job.

I've learned two very important things from this bump in the

road. The first thing is that all of the material stuff people go into debt for isn't worth a fraction of the peace of mind I feel at night, when my head hits the pillow and I know I'm debt-free. My car may very well have a piece of duct tape on the hood, but no one is going to take it away from me because I can't make my payment. The second thing I learned is that the old adage "everything happens for a reason" is true, even though we rarely believe this or get to see evidence of it. But it is true. And sometimes we get to see it.

~Britteny Elrick

