

Lori Uhlend

**Confessions of a Confused Eternal Optimist
Looking for Her Misplaced Mojo**

This is really cutting into my Peggle time. Y'know, Peggle. It's a computer game. If you aim the ball just right, it bounces off the pegs and racks up points and if you catch it in the bucket you get even more. Points are like pats on the back. Cuz for me, it's all about ...well, what IS it all about? Alfie? That Burt Bacharach, Dionne Warwick song has been playing over and over in my head so much lately that I watched the whole thing on cable in the middle of the afternoon last week. Michael Caine didn't have the answers either. So I'm so paralyzed with insecurity that a high Peggle score seems like an attainable goal right now.

Allow me to digress. The last time I was between jobs, I started my own business, volunteered for two charities and the school PTO, and showered daily. These days it's a little different. I just lost my dream job. Well I quit actually but it feels like a loss. I feel like I'm mourning it. I had such high hopes. I was good at it. Not just getting a paycheck good, but really good. Coming-in-on-my-day-off-good. Putting-my-own-projects-on-the-back-burner-for-the-sake-of-the-team-good. Stand-back-and-take-a-picture-of-it-good. Talk about pats on the back. Department heads loved me and really relied on my partnership. On regional conference calls, my team's results were always complimented. Once a corporate honcho described a project I designed with my work friend as a, "Nugget of Goodness". I wanted to print it on T-shirts for us. So when my pathological liar of a boss wrote that I didn't, "take enough ownership," and that I "needed to earn the trust of my teammates," on my annual review, I was sickened. Having played it over and over in my little brain like that heart wrenching song, I believe that he set out to bring me down, to push the buttons that he knew would get to me. It worked. He was threatened by my ownership and honesty. The things he lacked. And he got rid of me.

The worst part of it is—I let him. I let that little shit of a human get to me. And because of it, I've lost my mojo. I can't make a comment on a friend's Facebook page without second-guessing my own wit. Emailed invitations go unanswered. I have nothing to give to the Non-profit of

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my choice. I don't even want to show my face at school for fear of having to explain how I fucked up my dream job to another mom. So I play another game of Peggle and watch another movie on cable. Stella got her groove back. Why can't I? I say to myself, "What do I care what people think? In high school I wore bedroom slippers to private school to flout the dress code. In college I buzzed my hair and wore a beret with vintage buttons on it. I've had literally dozens of jobs and worked for jerks of every stripe. So why has this shaken me so?"

Dionne sang, "without true love we just exist Alfie." Well I truly loved that job. I used to say it all the time. Even though everyone there thought my boss was the poster child for Sociopaths on Ice, I found his audacity amusing. I used to even stick up for him. When his boss was badmouthing him to the team at another store, I actually sided with him and gave him the heads up that he was being maligned. So I felt jilted by my review. Left at the altar. Screwed. Now this is not to say that this job was my one true love. My darling husband, life partner, main squeeze is that. And my kid, is a constant and wondrous source and recipient of affection. But I've always been one to need a little more. I like to work. I like the industry of it. The finite quality. The schedule. I like getting up in the morning and knowing what I'm doing that day. I like getting that done and washing my hands and feeling good about it.

I'm not feeling that good about my Peggle scores. Maybe time will pass and I'll trust me again. I'll start wearing hats again. I'll put on some mascara. And find, "something even non-believers can believe in" again. At least I have time to dig out that Best of Bacharach CD and sing along with Dionne.

Lori Uhland is a confused eternal-optimist housewife, looking for her misplaced mojo