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## **We've Decided to Go in a Different Direction**

“Kim, would you please come in here.”

My boss was notorious for turning what would normally be questions into polite orders. I was sitting at my desk, directly outside his office. His Second-in-Command-for-whenever-delicate-tasks-needed-to-be-completed was in his wake as he strode by. Heart dropping to my stomach, I grabbed paper and pen and joined them. My boss closed the door behind me.

I've been working for nearly two years in a job I don't like, for a boss I don't particularly care for. I've stayed because I needed the money and because I couldn't figure out anything better to do. Dreaming of what I would like to do when I “grew up”, I passively searched the want ads for the perfect job:

“Wanted. High-energy female desperately needed to write about topics that interest her. Candidate will be independent-minded and a self-starter, as she will be her own boss. Pay will be exorbitant for the right candidate. Flexible schedule anticipated to encourage continued excessive volunteering for her children's activities.”

But I haven't seen that employment listing yet, so I keep plugging away at this job. The last time I was summoned to a closed-door office visit with my boss, I was given

a bonus. The time before that, I was privy to some confidential information. Prior to that, I was yelled at because I inadvertently offended a customer by being too concerned with the bottom line. So only one time out of the last three was I actually in trouble. Still, I just knew that my curt office summons did not bode well for me.

I think when a person is as unhappy in her job as I was, it is reflected upon her face. As much as I tried to do my boss's bidding, there was no joy in it. There was docility, but no zest. How had it come to this? When had the enthusiasm metamorphosed into relief when it was time to go home and dread when I woke up the next day? Looking back, I see the earnest attempts to creative problem-solve and brainstorm, dismissed, as not worthy of consideration. It was the marginalization that got to me; my need to fit in and be a contributing team player, rebuffed, that hurt so much.

My boss wasted no time on niceties. "The firm has decided to go in a different direction. We've decided to cut marketing back to a part-time position. Furthermore, we now believe that we need a graphic designer with a background in architecture, so we can bill out his services at least half the time."

Second-in-Command nodded his assent. A whirl of emotions flooded over me. I had actually fantasized about confronting my boss and making him fire me so I could cut the cord and move on. Now, however, I wasn't so sure I was ready to take a leap into the unknown. I was told there was no need to stick around, but I had two options to consider: either a two-week severance, effective immediately, if I did not sign a separation agreement and general release, or a six-week severance, effective immediately, if I did sign the prepared document.

I said I needed time to mull it over, and skedaddled out of the boss's office. When Second-in-Command appeared, I asked him if my graphic design/billable replacement was hired already. "Yes," he said.

"When does he start?" I asked.

"Tomorrow," he replied. As he walked away, I turned my attention to cleaning out my desk. I attempted to download my non-work related documents to a CD-ROM. However, during my closed-door meeting, our IT professional had severed my access to the computer network. After a call to IT and a brief conference with Second-in-Command, I was permitted to retrieve my documents. Finally, with my CD in hand and my satchel stuffed with the photographs of my children and step-children that adorned my work station, I focused on my exit.

Drawing myself up, I stopped by every available co-workers desk to say goodbye. Oh yes, it was awkward. While trying to stay upbeat, I replied to everyone who asked that it was a management decision to go in a new direction. Some of my co-workers were distinctly uncomfortable with how to respond. Others were genuinely supportive and complimentary. My final stop was with the boss, who assured me it was nothing personal - just business - and to please contact him for a personal reference when needed. Then I was gone, walking into the vast void that was, for the moment, my immediate future.

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Postscript: Kim reports she's rediscovered her zest for life as an available mom to her two children and three step-children, avid volunteer and freelance writer. Marginalization is not a problem anymore. However, she's still searching for the exorbitant pay.