

TITLE: Perks of the Job

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RATING: T

WARNINGS: Adult language

DISCLAIMER: Characters belong to their corporate parents. I'm just playing with them and I have no money worth going to court over, though the zine collection might be worth something.

SUMMARY: Another Deb D prompt

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“You know, I’d heard that the dress attire was all white, but I supposed I hadn’t realized how far that applied.”

Marella gestured to the open door of her office and followed the woman in. As Archangel’s Senior Assistant, it was her responsibility to get the new, more junior, Assistants up to speed as quickly as possible.

“It cuts down on time trying to put together an outfit in the morning,” she said.

There were about two dozen excuses for the all-white garb. She’d heard them all and could repeat them easily without any real effort or actual conviction. Some said it was a personal quirk of Archangel’s because over the centuries, most artists had depicted the Archangel Michael in white garb, to symbolize enlightenment. Some speculated that Michael Coldsmith-Briggs was color-blind, some that he’d lost a bet, and most agreed that he enjoyed leaving everyone wondering. After the first year, she’d stopped trying to uncover the real reason for the unique dress code but Olivia, like every new assistant before her, would speculate; at least for a time.

Olivia Blake had dressed for the part already in a white wrap dress and heels. After interviews with her regional Director, with Marella and then finally Archangel, she had a good idea of her responsibilities in this career-pathing HQ assignment. Marella liked to cover the subtler and more personal points herself.

“And it’s definitely different from what you wore in Algeria,” she said, taking a seat behind her desk. “I can give you a list of about fifteen boutiques. We give them steady business and they make sure their buyers order a larger than usual selection in white, so the selection is good, the styles are current fashions and they have variety that you won’t find in a department store where you come out looking as if you are working in a hospital.”

Olivia’s expression said that she had already tried that route.

“Of course, it helps that we’re in California where a lot of women like to wear white to show off their tans. The thing that the men never think about is how difficult it is to make sure your bra and panties don’t show through an all white outfit without having to wear something that your mother would buy for you.”

Olivia's laugh seemed to loosen the tension in her spine and Marella hid a smile. Dealing with the lingerie question early and directly broke down the barriers more quickly and it was usually the first time she saw a glimpse of the real woman she'd be mentoring, not the cover story.

"I wish I could say that we have stores that cater to us and keep a large supply of flesh colored lingerie but the reality is that the best place to buy it is in Europe, not Los Angeles. New York is getting better but that's the real reason why everyone volunteers to accompany Archangel whenever he travels to Paris, Milan or London on business."

"How often does that happen?"

Marella tilted her head, considering it and then frowned. "Almost never. His trips are usually quick, covert, and rarely to places with great shopping. And when they are, you won't have any time to shop. There are some nice lingerie stores in Beverly Hills but be prepared to blow your rent money if you're shopping there, if not on lingerie, then on shoes." She grinned. "And I can give you a long list of shoe stores that will order white shoes in whatever style you want. Just make sure you can run in them."

"I know there are some jobs in the Firm where it is a nine-to-five position. This isn't one of them but you're used to that from the field. The boss usually arrives between seven and seven-thirty in the morning and he'll expect a briefing as soon as he walks in the door." She noted Olivia's sudden tension. "That's usually my job but if I'm out of the office on assignment, one of you picks it up. Don't worry. It's mostly a matter of reading the Daily Briefing reports from DI and calling out anything of particular interest to him. He'll read the entire thing himself after he's had coffee but he wants to know high priority items right away."

She waited a beat for Olivia to ask how she was expected to know what was of particular interest to Archangel. The other woman just nodded. Good.

"There's no such thing as quitting time; the day ends when the day ends. Sometimes that is five o'clock, believe it or not. Sometimes it's nine, sometimes it's midnight. It's why most of us don't spend a lot of money on our apartments. You can rent wherever you want. Go upscale if you want, but it's a waste of money. You'll spend most of your time here or traveling, either with Archangel or handling matters on his behalf. Make sure it's a building with very good security and a gym or a pool if possible. If you want some recommendations..."

"You have a list," Olivia said confidently.

Marella smiled.

“How are the flying lessons going?”

Olivia’s eyes widened, just a little, and she shook her head.

“It’s one of the more unusual job requirements, that’s for sure. I’ve done just over 20 hours of instruction and logged 10 hours in solo practice.”

“Good. Another ten or fifteen hours and you’ll be ready for your checkride, but you’re going to need to log a lot more than that before the Firm is going to let you fly Archangel anywhere.” She almost managed to suppress a smile. “At least in a Firm helicopter. He has a medical waiver so if you’re flying him, you’ve got a copilot right there with you if you need it and he can take over the controls if he has to.” She smiled outright. “Or if he wants to.”

Olivia nodded.

“Do you have a boyfriend?”

As usual, the question generated raised brows and the type of hesitation that came from someone who wanted to say it was none of her business but wasn’t sure if that would fly here.

“Let me be blunt. This job is stressful and while working out at the gym or going for a run are great ways to deal with the stress, sex is better. And if you’re having sex with someone you care about, you get the benefits of physical exertion, an endorphin rush plus the chance to connect with someone intimately.” Marella tilted her head forward, a subtle signal to pay attention that she was pleased to see mirrored by the new assistant. “Our jobs require a lot of emotional detachment. We can’t do the job properly otherwise. Being able to connect on a physical and emotional level very intimately on a regular basis is good for your mental, physical and emotional health. This job is hard on relationships but if you have one, try to keep it.”

A climbing eyebrow.

“And if I don’t? Or if he’s six thousand miles away?”

Marella shrugged.

“Working out helps. So does yoga. There are thousands of attractive, available men in the greater Los Angeles area who’d be happy to help you burn off some excess tension or are willing to be friends with benefits. Just be careful. Obviously there will always be some wolves in the pack after more than sex.”

“You make it sound so romantic,” Olivia said with a wry smile and they both laughed.

“Okay, so the all-white dress code, the long hours, the stressful job and leaving the boyfriend six thousand miles away aside, there are some perks that no one’s told you.”

Olivia sat up a little in her chair and there was a subtle brightening in her expression, especially in her eyes.

“Since there is an all-white dress code, there’s a clothing allowance that you will see in your paycheck. It’s not official policy so we don’t talk about it.” She raised an eyebrow asking for acknowledgement and Olivia nodded, her mouth twitching upward into a smile. “The allowance in your paycheck should cover your dry cleaning bills, stockings, shoe repair and all the basic wear and tear of maintaining a professional image at all times. Since you’re new to the team, you’ll be advanced two thousand dollars to get a basic wardrobe in place.”

Surprise widened eyes and a definite smile.

“But that’s not the best perk,” Marella said. “As I’ve mentioned and keep mentioning, this is a high stress job and Archangel understands that we work long hours and essentially put a lot of our lives on hold while we’re working for him. As a gesture of his personal appreciation, each of us gets a monthly spa day for one of the weekend days that you are not on call. It’s a full day session of treatments and massages at a private spa. Total pampering, lunch, classes if you want, hot tub and meditation if you just want some private you time.”

“You’re shitting me.”

This was the moment where she always wondered if Accounting was going to send an internal spy who had somehow made it through a difficult field assignment and a series of interviews with people trained to ferret out the truth from practiced liars.

“Take advantage of it,” Marella advised. “It’s easy to get caught up in the demands of the job and put your own needs on hold. That one day can really recharge you, help you clear your head and it’s nice to have a whole staff waiting on *you* for a change.”

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It was late enough that his office was dim, with only the desk lamp spreading a pool of light in a circle that encircled his desk. He looked up from the papers he was reviewing and put down the pen he was using to take notes.

“How did it go with Olivia?”

She leaned back against the inside of his door and locked it with a practiced movement.

“Good.” Marella gave him a real smile, not the professional one she used with people she didn’t know well. “She shows a lot of potential.”

Michael leaned back in his chair, head slightly tilted, gesturing with his chin at the door, acknowledging what she’d done.

“You gave her the speech about having sex and lots of it to deal with the stress of working for me, didn’t you?”

“Mmm-hmmm.”

She climbed across his lap and slid one arm around his neck. The other hand slipped between his legs and he sighed as her mouth met his.

Some perks were best kept to oneself.

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Prompt: Airwolf, Michael/Marella, the boss is one of the perks of the job.