

IM

Flash fiction for guests of the WordFeeder.
Saturday, April 12, 2008

© Copyright 2008 Les Cohen (aka "WordFeeder")
Ellicott City, Maryland – All rights reserved.

"Hey." Robert Brent, EVP for Media Operations, looked up from his desk at the man standing in the doorway to his office. Gesturing quickly with his the pen in his right hand, "Come on in. ...Just give me a second to finish this," he went back to writing unintelligible notes on the single sheet of white paper in the only clear space he had left on his desk.

Finished, for now, he looked up. Sitting on the edge of one of the two guest chairs was the rumpled Management Associate he used for everything. Not yet 30, Will would never make the pages of GQ. Other than not looking good in a suit, there wasn't much he couldn't do. He was a natural, a person executives like Brent used, but also respected, a rare combination given the intense in-company competition that was the world of their business. More to the point, Will was good, really good, but without the experience to be a threat to his mentor. Some day probably, but not yet.

"Here's the transcript I told you about." Will sat up slightly, leaning forward to hand a copy across the desk. "It's less than 20 minutes old."

Charles: *"I thought you weren't working late tonight."*

Will sat there, already familiar with the text, while Robert read it for himself, out loud. Charles was brash, sometimes hard to take, but the most effective media buyer they had.

Adriana: *"I'm working on tomorrow's presentation. Leave me alone."*

Charles: *"You could always delete my e-mail address."*

Adriana: *"I didn't think I had any choice."*

Charles: *"You don't, not if you want to keep your precious reputation intact."*

Adriana: *"Stop it. I don't want to have this conversation on-line."*

Charles: *"They watch our e-mail. IM is live. We're okay."*

Robert looked up. "I thought he was right. How'd you get this?"

"It's the new kid in IT. The one we picked up on work release from "juvi." There's nothing he can't do."

"Hm. That's scary. Can we trust him?"

"Are you kidding? We don't even understand him. Our only hope is that he likes us."

“Great,” and Robert looked down again at the transcript, mumbling almost to himself, “Find out what he wants and make sure he gets some.”

Adriana: (No response.)

She’d been there almost a year. Just three years since her MBA. Very competitive. Attractive, but not so much as to be distracting. Hard working, and obviously smart, there was something Robert didn’t trust about her, an insincerity he felt, but couldn’t confirm. She’d have to get past Charles to make any real progress, but didn’t have the contacts in the media, and was relegated to handling buys in the smaller markets.

Charles: *“I’ve got another friend I’d like you to meet.”*

Adriana: *“Screw you, and I hope they are listening.”*

Charles: *“You did great. We’d never have gotten that pricing without you.”*

Adriana: *“That just happened, you jerk. I actually liked the guy. So it helped the company. Good, but it’s not something I’m doing on a regular basis.”*

Charles: *“You’ll do whatever I tell you to do.”*

Adriana: (Pause.) *“What makes you think I won’t print and drop this on Brent’s desk in the morning?”*

Charles: *“Because we’ll both be fired. Because by the time will gets done spreading the word, you’ll be lucky to find work waiting tables in Sioux Falls.”*

Adriana: *“Up yours. I’m going home. Stay away from me, or I’m calling a lawyer, whatever it costs me.”*

“Is that all there was?” Robert was hoping for more.

“That was it.”

“Are we sure it’s real?”

“They were both in their offices, on their computers when I walked by a few minutes ago. Besides, neither of them would know how to fake their IP addresses, or have a reason to write this if they knew we were listening.”

Robert wasn’t so sure. You could tell the way he looked away from Brian, turning and then tilting his head slightly from side to side, and did that small thing with his lips.

“...So what do you want to do? We’ll lose clients, not to mention Board support for your expansion strategy if we’re slapped with an harassment suit and it makes the paper.”

“I’ll call San Francisco. There’s an opening there. It’ll be a promotion for her, and Hastings owes me one. As for Charles, I don’t want him to know we have this. Let’s see what he does next.”

“Good night, guys.” It was Adriana, coat over her arm, the weight of her heavy leather briefcase forcing the one shoulder higher than the other. “See you tomorrow.”

Brian, turning in his chair, raised his eyebrows, his way of saying, “Hi.”

Brent went out of his way to be pleasant. “Thanks for staying. Good luck with the presentation.” And was that.

Fourteen minutes and a short taxi ride later, she kicked the door to her apartment closed with the heel of her shoe. “Hey, how’d it go?” Dropping her coat and briefcase onto the hardwood, she wasted no time unbuttoning her blouse, kicking off the comfortable business heels she’d been wearing that day without breaking her stride.

The kid on work release, his red floppy hair in disarray, looked up from the copy of Maxim he’d picked up from the newsstand on the corner. “I’m guessing they’ll be recommending you for the opening in San Francisco as soon as they open in the morning.”

“And Charles?”

“He hasn’t a clue.”

Les Cohen
Ellicott City, Maryland
LesCohen1@verizon.net
www.WordFeeder.us