**Incentive Program**

by rsw

**Chapter One**

Janet hesitated before knocking. Her stomach was so tied in knots that she hadn’t been able to eat lunch. She hated being called into the boss’ office.

What would she do if she lost her job? Unemployment wouldn’t pay nearly enough to cover the mortgage, much less the car note and everything else. If she could just get the lazy idiots working for her to perform, maybe she could get through this rough patch.

Needs must, she thought and gently rapped on the solid oak door. After the answering bellow, she entered. “You wanted to see me, sir?”

“Please have a seat.”

Straight to business. Never a good sign.

“Do you know why you’re here?” Mr. Williams asked.

Janet bit the side of her mouth. “The QC Analysis, sir. My numbers are down again this quarter.”

“Quite right. I’m afraid that we did you no favors with the promotion. To be honest, the other senior partners want me to take immediate corrective action. You’re running out of chances.”

‘Immediate corrective action’ sounded ominous. She chewed her lip. “I don’t know what to say, sir. Maybe I’m just not cut out for management. I can’t get the men to respond to me. I make sure that they don’t have any distractions. I point out, specifically, their mistakes. I even fired the worst one of them and brought in a replacement with a proven track record from another unit. By the end of a month, his job execution was almost as bad as the one that I got rid of.”

Her eyes welled up. Great, she thought, crying in front of the boss. He probably sees me as a kid. Certainly not as someone to entrust with major responsibility.

“What’s your relationship with your group?” he asked.

The question threw her. “There is no relationship. I’m the boss; they’re my subordinates. I tell them what to do.” She liked being in charge.

“Have you tried making friends with them?”

“Truthfully, sir, I don’t make friends easily. I prefer to maintain purely professional associations with the people with whom I work.”

He nodded slowly. “That’s part of the problem. If they don’t feel that they can relate to you, they won’t work as hard for you. Have you tried incentives?”

“Like what? Obviously, the company has a bonus program. They’re all aware of it.”

“Above and beyond those. Some managers sponsor pizza lunches and what have you when the team meets their goals.”

“You think a pizza party would help?”

“Not necessarily that, but you have to try something. I like you and think that you have a ton of potential. You’re smart, and you’re a hard worker. I’d hate to lose you.” He flipped through the daily planner on his desk. “I’m going to give you one more quarter to improve. Stop by again on the first Monday following the release of the QCA.”

After she nodded, Mr. Williams said, “In the meantime, I’d suggest that you take drastic measures to improve. Offer incentives. Try to relate to them. Anything. Make it work.”

**Chapter Two**

Janet had no idea what to do. If she would have been able to make the men work efficiently, she wouldn’t have gotten in trouble in the first place. She spent an hour with her office door closed trying to figure out what to do and came up with nothing.

I need to treat this as a problem to be analyzed and solved, she thought.

She took out a legal pad and wrote:

PROBLEM: Men in my group are not performing up to standards.

KNOWN: Group performed under previous manager.

UNKNOWN:

She thought for a moment.

Obviously, the unknown was why didn’t the men work as hard for her as they did for the previous manager? What was she doing wrong? Or, more to the point, what could she do to make them work harder?

Writing the problem helped her quickly determine that she had no idea how to solve it. She needed help.

Normally, she would never have considered going to one of her employees. It was a desperate time, however, and her reasoning clearly indicated that only a member of her team would be able to tell her what was wrong. With that decision made, the choice of which person to ask was easy.

Only one of the eight men in her unit had ever been friendly to her. Scott had actually flirted with her at first. Though she’d been somewhat flattered by the attention, she’d put an end to it as inappropriate.

Janet dialed his extension. “Scott, please come to my office.” She hung up the phone without waiting for a reply.

Moments later, there was a knock at her door, and she directed him to enter and sit. “As you know, the QC numbers for this unit are dreadfully low.”

His face reddened. “You’re firing me? I’m the best worker you have!”

Janet didn’t understand why everyone in her group always assumed the worst about her. “That’s not why I called you in here.” She gritted her teeth. “I need your help.”

“What do you need?” He sounded a bit surprised but amenable.

“The men don’t exert as much effort under my supervision as they did for my predecessor. Why is that? What am I doing wrong?”

Scott leaned back. “Let’s say I’m completely honest with you, list all your mistakes. Pointing out deficiencies tends to make people mad. How do I know you won’t end up letting me go?”

He had a point.

She thought for a moment. “All I can do is to ask you to trust me. For the remainder of this conversation, you can say anything at all and I will not hold it against you.”

Scott hesitated. “Whatever your flaws, I think you’ll keep your word. I accept your terms.”

He held out his hand, and she shook it.

“To begin with,” he said, “we all really liked Bob and were sad to see him go. He bowled with us in our league and was more of a friend than a boss. You came in with a completely different attitude.”

He paused for a moment. “Look, it’s basically a difference of opinion. You come from a traditional school of thought and where managers shouldn’t associate with employees under them. The rest of us see management and workers as both being people. That has the other guys thinking that you feel you’re better than them.”

Janet took it at face value that the boss was the boss. That there was any other way of looking at it surprised her. Still, she had asked his help, and she’d give careful consideration to his ideas. “Okay. What else?”

“You’re so strict with the rules. You don’t allow headphones. You restrict personal calls. Every time that you forbid us from doing something that may ‘distract’ us, you make us feel that you don’t trust us to do our jobs. We are responsible adults. If we get our job done, don’t bother us with the little stuff.”

This wasn’t going well. She didn’t know if she could believe this advice, and it wasn’t easy to hear. “Is that all?”

“Don’t discount how important morale is. It’s hard to put in the work required by this company when you feel that your supervisor doesn’t trust or respect you.”

Janet tried to put herself in the shoes of her men. How would she feel if Mr. Williams stayed on her case and issued orders for everything that she did? She hadn’t thought about it that way. “What would you suggest I do to turn things around?”

“My main advice would be to loosen up. Let your hair down.” He smiled. “Wear shorter skirts.”

She spoke without thinking. “At this point, I’d not wear a skirt at all if it meant the numbers returning to the baseline.”

Scott brightened immediately. “Do you mean that? Would you really come to work without a skirt on?”

She blushed. “It was just a figure of speech.”

He leaned forward. “Think about it seriously. If I could get the team to bring their numbers up to the norm, would you spend a single day without your skirt?”

“I’m assuming that you don’t mean I wear pants for a day.”

He grinned. “You wear whatever it is that you normally wear under your skirt.”

The thought of the men in her group seeing her that way horrified her. “I couldn’t.”

“What’s the big deal? Your blouse would cover your panties. The only thing we’d be seeing would be more of is your – is it hose or stockings?”

“Stockings.” As soon as she said it, she realized she shouldn’t have answered. It was none of his business.

“So,” he said, “for the price of letting us see the tops of your stockings and maybe a little bit of bare thigh, you’d get vastly improved performance. In retrospect, I’m not sure that it’s worth it on our end.”

Though the concept of doing something so embarrassing seemed ludicrous on the face of it, she had promised herself she’d consider what he had to say. On one end, she faced disappointing Mr. Williams and the very real prospect of losing her house. On the other, she couldn’t imagine the embarrassment of walking around the office so scantily attired.

The problem was that she didn’t have a choice. Jobs in her field were scarce at best, and, with a failure like this one on her resume, she’d be lucky to get half her current salary. If this would get them to work, she could grin and bear the humiliation for a day. Right?

She sighed. “If the team’s numbers are back up to the baseline when I view the next QCA, I’ll remove my skirt for the entire day.”

Scott shook his head. “Sorry. Like I just said, I don’t think that’s good enough. The guys will have to put in a lot of work to reach that goal.”

“It’s the work they should be doing anyway!”

He shrank from her shout, and she paused to gather herself.

“Scott, I’m offering to humiliate myself. Can you even imagine how hard it would be for me to do this? What else could you possibly want?”

“The chance for seeing more.”

Janet couldn’t speak; she had no idea how to respond.

“Look, I don’t want to sound like a pervert, but guys like to see women naked. It’s a fact. The prospect of being able to see you walking around the office without clothes would be a huge motivator.”

“No way! Not going to happen!” The thought of her employees ogling her body, seeing her bare breasts, her even more private parts, horrified her.

Scott didn’t respond for a while, just got a faraway look in his eye. Finally, he grinned. “Sorry. Got distracted by a great mental image.”

Heat rose to Janet’s face.

“What’s the big deal? As far as I can tell, you’ve got a great figure.”

She did not have anything that approached a great figure. “I can’t take off my clothes at the office. I simply can’t.”

His smile widened. “I’m yanking your chain a bit. You won’t actually get naked, just give the guys a chance that you could.”

“What do you mean?” Janet should have ended the conversation long ago. She couldn’t believe she was considering going along with any of this.

“What’s the best that any unit has ever done?” he asked.

“A group in the Dallas office exceeded 50% above baseline.”

“Perfect,” Scott said. “We tell the guys that, if they make norm for the next quarter, you take off your skirt. If they make 25% above for the quarter after that, you work a day without either your blouse or skirt. A quarter later, it’s 50% over for your bra and, finally, 75% over to get your panties.”

Janet shook her head firmly. “I told you. I will not strip naked.”

He plastered on his face the most disarming smile she’d ever seen. “Do you really think that there’s any chance of this group, who has never gotten above one hundred ten percent, setting a company record? Worst case scenario, we reach the second incentive, and you show off your underwear.”

She found herself nodding. There was no way they’d do that well. “And if they miss any of the benchmarks?”

“Then it’s over. No big deal.”

“You make is sound so trivial,” she said. “Walk around the office half naked. ‘No big deal.’ What are you thinking?”

“That it’s no different than wearing a bikini at the beach.”

“First of all, I wouldn’t wear a bikini around my coworkers. Second, I wouldn’t wear a bikini at work. Third, underwear is not a bikini!” She gritted her teeth. “I’m not happy about removing the skirt, but I’ll commit to that deal. No more.”

Scott shrugged. “Oh well. Sorry my suggestion didn’t work for you.” He rose and turned to leave.

Janet couldn’t lose her job. It would be the end of her security, her house, and her car. She shut her eyes. “Okay. I’ll do it.”

**Chapter Three**

Though she hated what it did to her feeling that she maintained control, Janet rescinded her policies regarding personal calls and emails and allowed workers to listen to music however they wanted as long as no one else complained. She made an effort to be more friendly and accessible, going as far as to eat lunch in the break room instead of in her office, and night classes in management at the local community college helped with her supervisory techniques.

The level of work increased. She wondered what it said about her leadership that the only way to get her group to work was to give them the opportunity to humiliate her.

On the Monday that the analysis report came out, Scott waited for her outside her office. She had avoided looking at the numbers in advance because she figured that she was screwed either way. If her team made their goal, she’d be walking around without a skirt. If they didn’t, she’d be walking around without a job.

“What’s the verdict?” he asked.

She motioned for him to follow her in. As the computer booted, they made small talk. Her heart beat sped the closer she got to logging into the company database. “One percent above baseline. Congratulations. I guess that I owe you my skirt.”

She couldn’t believe that she was about to get partially undressed in the office, especially considering what she wore underneath. Though she hadn’t specifically agreed to wear the lacy, bikini cut panties and pair them with stockings, she had implied that she would wear what she normally did.

Why didn’t she wear hose and ultra-conservative underwear?

She moved her hand to the button on her skirt.

“Wait,” Scott said. “It would be a good gesture if you took it off in front of the entire team. They worked really hard for this.”

Janet blushed as she thought about stripping for the whole crew. He was right, though, they had earned it.

“Okay.” She couldn’t believe how meek the word had sounded.

He grinned and literally rubbed his hands together like she was a huge steak about to be served up. “You’re going to make their lives.”

She wondered what he was thinking. Was this all a joke to him? Did he want to humiliate her? Could it be possible that all the flirting was legitimate?

He can’t be attracted to me, she thought.

She stood more than a foot shorter than his six foot three, and the lack of physical activity associated with her job had caused her to gain a bit of weight. Her stringy brown hair fell haphazardly down her back, and her clothing did nothing to accentuate her figure.

They sat making awkward small talk until the other team members arrived and got settled.

“You ready?” Scott asked.

“Not really, but no help for it.”

Scott smiled at her and held out his hand. Janet took it and felt oddly reassured as he led her out of her office.

Once all the men had gathered around, Janet cleared her throat. “Congratulations and thanks to all of you for your hard work. You managed to exceed your goal. Now it’s time for me to pay up.” Her voice shook.

She looked at eight staring faces, sixteen eyes all looking at her almost unblinking.

I can’t do this, she thought.

Even though it would only reveal her legs, the concept of taking off her skirt in front of her men was so humiliating. Her heart thudded in her chest.

She couldn’t believe what she was about to do.

Janet wanted to run to her office and almost did just that. They couldn’t force her to carry through with her promise. Her door and her power to fire them would protect her modesty.

She caught Scott’s eyes. He looked so encouraging, so eager, like he actually wanted to see her body.

Keeping her gaze fixed on him, she blocked out the other men.

With shaking hands, she undid the button at her waist. She hesitated as the garment loosened. Stupid, it’s supposed to do that.

She slid the zipper down. The skirt released, and only her grasping fingers resisted gravity’s sway.

Scott nodded.

Janet unclenched her grip. The skirt slid over her thighs and fell to the floor. Mechanically, she lifted one leg and the other to step out of it, leaving her in the office with only her panties protecting her modesty. She bent at the knees to pick it up.

She couldn’t believe what she’d just done.

Scott reached out his hand. “I’ll hold onto that for you.”

Too stunned to even question, she gave it to him.

“Do a turn.”

Not knowing why she followed his commands, she stared straight at the ugly gray commercial-grade carpet and did a slow turn for them. Her blouse covered her panties and tops of her stockings in the front and back. On the sides, the smallest bit of bare leg peeked above black lace.

After completing the revolution, she forced herself to look at the men’s faces, expecting to see mirth at her humiliation. Instead, their gazes held something she rarely experienced being directed at her — lust.

Janet retreated to her office. Though not an asexual person, Janet refused to let her life be ruled by her libido. She masturbated less than once every couple of months, and, though not a virgin, her experiences, mainly from college, had been unfulfilling to say the least.

Her group looking at her — that was intense. A mix of feelings washed through her, including the expected vulnerability and embarrassment. She hadn’t figured on feeling such a sense of power, though.

And the stirrings in herself. She wondered how it was possible that partially exposing herself to the men turned her on.

Worse, wondering about it only seemed to make her condition more intense. If she was at her home, she would have reached for her special drawer in the nightstand beside her bed.

Stop focusing on that!

With effort, she pushed such considerations from her mind and concentrated on her work. Before she knew it, it was time for lunch.

No one would complain if she abandoned her lately found habit of dining in the lunch room. No one would think it odd if she remained secluded in her office given the state of her attire. No one would be too disappointed in her.

No, she thought, one person would be. Herself.

Hiding, denying the men their just reward, wasn’t how she honored agreements.

Her silk blouse caressed her bare thighs as she grabbed her lunch bag. Flames engulfed her face as she marched to join the men, and another ache grew in the pit of her stomach.

Janet couldn’t help but wonder if she wanted this, to be exposed and vulnerable. Or, maybe, simply to have men consider her as desirable?

She pretended to ignore the stares as she pulled up a seat with Scott and two others but blushed even more when she realized that the blouse slipped as she did so. White fabric peeked from her crotch.

Her panties! She was flashing her panties! To the men who worked for her.

Trying to appear nonchalant, she adjusted her shirttails, and the men made no crude comments. Instead, they made small talk with her and welcomed her into their conversation in a way that they hadn’t before. By the time the hour was up, she had almost forgotten her exposure and was laughing at their stories. With the hour almost over, her purse buzzed.

After drawing out her Blackberry, she noted in horror the appointment reminder that popped up. She had completely forgotten about her meeting. “I need my skirt back.”

Scott looked confused. “The deal was for you to remain without it for the rest of the day.”

“It was, but this is important. I have to see Mr. Williams. I simply can’t go like this.”

Scott let out a long, slow breath. “Well, I can certainly understand that you would be embarrassed to run around the building dressed like you are, and I certainly wouldn’t prevent you from taking your skirt back if you really want it.” He paused. “Is that really what you want, though? I’ve always respected you for keeping your word. That’s how I got the men to work so hard, by telling them that you would never break a promise. Do you want to break that trust?”

After Janet’s parents divorced, her father made all kinds of promises. They were always going to go on a trip together or she was going to spend the weekend at his apartment. Something always came up. How many times had she been waiting at the curb with a suitcase only to have her mom come tell her that her dad called? How crushed had she been all those times?

She had vowed to herself that she would never be like him.

I only got in this situation to save my job. If Mr. Williams sees me like this, he could very well fire me.

It came down to which was more important — her job or her word.

“You’re right,” she said. “I made this agreement, and I’ll see it through. Bring the skirt to my office at five.”

Scott grinned. “I believe that the agreement was ‘day,’ not ‘workday.’ Why don’t I give it back to you in the morning?”

Janet’s jaw dropped. “You can’t mean that! Going home without a skirt on might be okay, but what if the team makes the other incentives? It wouldn’t be safe.”

He nodded. “Good point. I guess, on those days, I’ll just have to give you a ride.”

With that said, he calmly stood up and exited the room.