

“God damnit Florence, the guests will be here in under 5 hours, and the goddamned lights are the wrong color and the fucking chicken is rubbery.”

“I understand ma’am. The proper resolutions are being implemented as we speak. Johnathon is over with the electrician now, adjusting the wiring and ensuring a stronger connection. It appears the cables were at an odd angle, and the pressure was causing a decrease in the power outlet. Once that’s done, they will all be the same even a shade of rose gold. As for the chicken, well it was not as fresh as Mr. Montail insisted, so Chef Rosada is preparing an entirely new batch with her deepest assurances it will be ready on time.”

I let the words pour from my mouth, not stopping to take in the true anger on her face, with desperate hopes she would be put at the slightest ease with this information.

“Well Florence, as always, I am thoroughly impressed. You’ve yet again taken a horrid, absolutely abomination of a situation and calmly and efficiently solved it. Whatever would I do without you.”

“No worries ma’am. I’ve got it all under control, your party will far from disappoint.”

“Thank you. Thank you. I-I’m just so nervous, you know? I mean this is a make-or-break night for my entire company, and if I don’t secure this deal, I fear the empire my sisters and I worked so hard to build will crumble.”

“I promise you, Ms. Charleston, I will ensure everything runs smoothly. You just enjoy the party, have fun, and put your all into this deal, and you will secure it. And you will make Celia and Monsa proud!”

And with one small, desperate smile she held back her tears, nodded slightly, and disappeared into the house to start getting herself ready for the party.

On this blazing hot August afternoon, over 100 people were setting up and preparing for possibly the biggest event of the year. Later in the evening, we will be hosting a few of the lead representatives for the American Psychology Association, including the brand-new president, Cynthia de las Fuentes, PhD. So certainly stressful to say the least.

You see my employer, Ms. Danika Charleston owns one of the largest psychology research institutes in the world with campuses in 15 different countries. She's the founder of a handful of breakthrough therapeutic methods, and she's begun an efficient treatment protocol for serial killers. Nevertheless, a contract with the APA would allow her to extend her research, maximize funding, and break barriers no psychologist ever has.

Danika had originally founded *CDM Psychological Research & Development* with the help of her two sisters, Celia and Monsa. They were triplets and somehow shared the exact same passion, the understanding and subsequent curing of abnormalities in the brain. They were one another's only family and friends, their parents died when they were young, and they'd thrown all of their energy into their work. They never socialized much, but they managed to build a business out of nothing and the real work began.

About 2 years after the company had first opened, the Charleston sisters began taking in various psychiatric patients for temporary observations. At first, they would only ever take on a patient for an hour at a time, but those time frames soon grew into days. Days grew into weeks. And weeks turned into months.

The girls had become obsessed with the data they were able to collect by housing and personally monitoring those diagnosed with psychopathy to those diagnosed with ADHD. Everything was recorded in real-time, and they thought they'd collected enough to begin treatments for specific patients. The chemists had spent weeks working on a new sedative that

didn't hinder one's motor functions and mindset quite so much, and the sisters were just itching to begin testing.

Their first test subject seemed rather straightforward. He was a middle-aged man who'd had a complete psychotic break one night, resulting in him murdering not only his family but 6 other families that had lived on his street, patient 47. He'd stayed in their facility for observations many times before, and they knew the patient well, or at least they thought they did. The 3 girls insisted, against the advice of their security staff, to administer the injection themselves. They wanted to single-handedly observe the first effects of the treatment.

Now, I can only tell the story the way it was told to me, so I'm not quite sure I can even begin to cover the look that was in this man's eyes. But I do know I see Danika haunted by it every day of her life.

After they'd administered the drug, the man had gone limp. But then he began convulsing in a way that supposedly should have made his ribs crack and puncture his lungs and heart. But he just kept convulsing and screaming, and then he'd gone still again. They waited, terrified of the silence, and stared, willing for him to just wake up, just as healthy as he had before.

And after a long moment, the triplets decided it was time to leave the room and call in their medical examiner. It would be his first human under their employment, and they feared what he may find. As Danika twisted the knob to the door there was a sharp snap and loud crash. All three girls turned around to be face-to-face with what was the patient but seemed far from it now.

The man in front of them was three feet taller, 200 pounds broader, and much hairier than the patient who had just laid still in front of them, yet it was the same man. The same piercing blue eyes, a hint of the same demonic smirk, the same facial structure, the same stance. But his

veins seemed to pop from his skin by a centimeter and he foamed at the mouth. Green foam might I add. He glared down at the girls not with the narcissistic joy of a serial killer taunting his prey, but rather a monstrous animal ready to eat his well-deserved meal. And there was nothing about cannibalism in the file.

He charged, and the girls fought for their lives, but in the end, the beast they'd created was too strong. It grabbed Monsa first, taking a huge bite out of her neck, then pulling her limbs off as if she were a mere Lego toy, but with the sounds of bones snapping and fleshing being torn. Danika and Celia were pinned in the far corner of the room, unable to get around the thing and to the door as they watched it chomp down on their sisters' legs and arms, it tore her head off and ate the corpse.

Frozen to their places in fear, Danika and Celia could do nothing more than watch. It finished Monsa off in under a minute although it felt like an eternity. We couldn't get to the door, we couldn't get to the emergency help button. We couldn't do anything.

It took a step closer and grabbed Celia next, repeating the same process it had with Monsa, and left no trace of her either within a minute. The only evidence of another person was the blood that sprayed across the room. And Danika knew she was next. She closed her eyes and prepared to be with her sisters.

The thing had begun tearing her limbs off but had only managed to tear off a single arm before it groaned out in pain, dropped Danika from its grasp, and fell to the ground. They kept shooting it until they were out of bullets, then cut it apart, burning each piece. We had no idea what that patient had become. And by the time our team of scientists were able to notify security and protocols fell into place two of the girls had been murdered and the third was on her way there.

The response time had been 2 minutes and 14 seconds, and that little time was all it took to change everything for Danika, and for the destiny of the company. She eventually acquired a prosthetic and continued their work with quite a few adjustments. Danika had permanently closed their medicinal laboratory, fired the entire staff, and upped security. She'd drastically shortened the observation times of patients to less than ten-minute intervals and forbade the scientist and research teams from interacting with the patients first-hand, but rather threw plexiglass.

Her sisters died for their work, and she certainly wasn't going to let their death go without honor or respect. The Charleston sisters always knew they would revolutionize the field of psychology and Danika being the sole survivor, made her heavenly sisters proud.

So this was the biggest event of her life, the most important contract that would ever arise, and her only opportunity to keep her promises to Monsa and Celia. Being her assistant for over 2 decades now, and knowing the truth behind the importance of this party, I was going to make sure everything was perfect. I meant it when I'd promised I would take care of everything, and that Ms. Charleston would have nothing to worry about.

The five hours leading up to the party passed in a flash, the sun was setting, and it was already 4 pm with guests beginning to arrive within the hour. The preparation staff has already been sent home for the night, and the party team arrived just a bit ago. The caterers are finishing up the buffet and the band is tuning their instruments. The hostess walks up to me to double-check the guest list, and it is spot on. Everything is ready for guests and the various teams are taking their positions. It was time for me to mount the stage and give the final instructions and pow-wow to all of our employees.

“Catering team, host team, security detail, maintenance team, CDM representatives, marketing team, entertainment team, may I have all of your attention, please? Our guests are going to begin arriving within the hour, which means they can be here any second, okay? We don’t know who will show when, so from this point forward we all need to put on our professional gamefaces.

“This is a HUGE night for Ms. Charleston, I mean the biggest night of her career. Therefore everything must be perfect, we are hosting the president of the American Psychology Association, and she is our highest priority guest. She must not know it, but she must be the focus of every single one of your attention.

“Joanna and Demitri, it sounds corny but eye contact. When you two are dancing, please acknowledge her, and make her feel special during your number.

“Alyssa, it is crucial that your team neither over nor underfeeds her, and you must ensure that the alcohol is working in our favor.

“We all know what her preferences are in our jobs, and please do not forget, we are the backbone of this deal. Ms. Charleston may be our employer, and her name will go on that contract, but we are the sole reason she will either get it or not. So I implore each of you, to please make this the best night of our professional lives. Thank you all so much, and do remember, we will be the guests at the celebration bash if and when this deal goes through.”

And with that final round of applause from the eager workers, I disappeared into the house to find Danika and more than likely calm her nerves. I proceeded up the grand staircase, down the hall lined with pictures of Danika and her sisters, and down to the elegant master bedroom.

Nock Nock.

“Ms. Charleston, it’s Florence, may I come in?”

“Oh yes Florence, please get in here.” And I carefully twisted the knob and pushed.

I opened the door to find over a dozen gowns strewn across the room, many more pairs of shoes spread across the floor, and tears emanating from the corner of the room.

“Ms. Charleston?” Silence was the only answer she could give, and I knew in times like these she couldn’t bear being ‘the’ Ms. Charleston. She was once a part of a trio, the Ms. Charltons, and so everyone just called them by their first names. Doctor Danika seems to have a better ring to it, and she does hate the formality of being known as a ‘Ms.’, but PR claimed she required a more professional title to prove her authenticity.

“Danika.” I tried again, in a much softer and empathetic voice. “How are you doing honey pie?”

“Oh Florence, I just, I just don’t know how to do this. We were little girls, just kids dreaming of this moment. And never, ever did any of us dream of doing it without the other two. Nothing could have prepared me for this moment. I mean we’ve been prepping for months, but still, it’s just... They’re not here. My sisters. Monsa and Celia are not here! I’m doing this shit all alone.”

I could see the tears welling up in her eyes, not daring to spill out across her freshly painted cheek.

“I know Danika, and I’m so sorry. But I’m confident they would absolutely implore that you go out there and give it your all. You never let your collective dream die, you buried your sisters years ago, and this is the moment you’ve all dreamed of. They would be disappointed if you screwed up this opportunity despite your emotions.

“Now let’s get this gown zipped up, finish spraying your hair, and get down there. Guests will be arriving any moment and we NEED you to be ready. Everyone has done their part, and now it’s your turn. You’ve got this. You’re strong, you’re brave, and you can do quite literally anything you put your mind to. You will secure this contract, and you will continue breaking impossible barriers.”

There was a brief moment of silence. Anger, anguish, desire, excitement, and disgust washed across her face within seconds. She gave me a stern look before continuing, “I’ve got this! We’ve got this! We are going to secure this contract. We are going to send the progress of the science of psychology through the roof. We’ll remedy Autism in babies, and, and, we’ll cure Alzheimer’s Disease.”

And with that, we headed down the stairs. Arm in arm, knowing I couldn’t stray too far throughout the night. Being her assistant for many years, I serve as an emotional support outlet and know her better than anyone else in the world.

By the time we’d reached the courtyard, there were already a few dozen guests mingling about, enjoying the pleasantries of both the catering and entertainment teams. Danika began making her rounds and welcoming various CEOs and VIPs to her home while I was beginning to work on the executives and family members of said individuals. Warming them up to the idea of investing with Danika’s company, especially after she managed to secure this contract with the APA.

All in all, the night was going exactly as it was planned to. The president of the APA seemed thoroughly pleased with Danika, her work, and the company as a whole. Not a single guest seemed disappointed, we still had plenty of food and beverages on deck and the dancers were causing gasps and tears of joy and admiration.

Shortly after 6 pm, Danika began making her way to the stage for her infamous grand speech, known best as a tangent of sorts, expressing her pure rage with how slow the medical field is in terms of progression. Highlighting the ways she and her company go that extra step to ensure they are the absolute best they can be, strive past goals, boundaries, and expectations, and subsequently achieve the impossible.

Knowing this speech well enough to recite it in my sleep, I knew we were nearing the end with less than a minute left when there was a sudden crash coming from the end of the courtyard, closest to the winding drive leading to the Charleston mansion. Simultaneously every guest and employee, Danika and myself included, paused to assess the commotion.

From afar, I was sure my eyes had deceived me. A creature I can only compare to Bigfoot stood roughly 80 yards out from us and our guests, and he had just pushed the gates entirely from the frame, causing the crash. Weighing in at over 100 pounds each and deeply cemented into the thick reinforced brick and standing at over 12 feet tall, this figure in the distance shouldn't have been able to break that iron gate down with a Hummer, let alone its bare hands.

It was moving so quickly, covering 40 yards in just over a second, and before I could think of anything else, it stopped and waited at the edge of the decorated patio. Standing on the ground I could hear the whispers of curious guests, both astonished and scared. I glanced up to Danika to assess her reaction and all I saw was pure horror. She had the deepest fear for her life because of this man, and I could see the silent tears streaming down her rose-gold cheeks. Her mouth was gaping open, and her hands clutched to her chest so tight she may have been drawing blood.

I glanced back to get a better understanding of the figure, and I think I knew it at that moment. The height, the strength, the hairiness. It all made sense. A creature so vile could never be destroyed.

And then Danika finally spoke, “PATIENT 47!”

I only ever got the chance to turn back to Danika and see the look of death in her eyes. My peripheral revealed it charging towards me first, throwing the bodies of bystanders like ragdolls from his path.

And then it all went black.



Chronicles of AP