

Doctor Williams had made the decision weeks before he signed the papers; he'd known the entire time what he would do, it just came with such a regretful weight he had waited. Maybe if he'd done it sooner, or even had he waited longer, things would've gone differently. He thought as he stared at the empty casket meant to represent his most incredibly phenomenal patient D'Amber Lyons. Ms. Lyons was a peculiar case, sixteen years young and had been in his care since she was only a toddler. They had been melded into family by the time spent. Tear drops fell from his face and crashed into the hardwood church floor, besides their intentions the hands rubbing his back and hugging his shoulders could not stop the water works. He sobbed heavily. He sobbed throughout the remainder of the service and until the empty casket was lowered into the ground. Well, it wasn't entirely empty, just bodyless. The casket held three feathers.

Fourteen years ago:

"Doctor Williams...", the young nurse looked into Doctor Williams's eyes. She wanted to know what to do next; if there would even be a next thing to do. Or whether he would call it.

He stammered for a moment, "Time of —" before he could finish the statement of medical finality, the young girl came back to them with a huge gasp of air.

At only two years old D'Amber had gone to the beyond and made it back. Her life would not be the same after.

She had been at the hospital for three days before her next of kin was finally contacted. A Great Aunt, three states away. She was unable to leave the nursing home to care for the child, who'd just lost her entire family to the accident. Her father who'd been a successful musician had only intended to give everyone a great time; he nor the bus could have reacted fast enough to the speeding, red-light running Honda that crashed into them. Initially the cops had been more concerned with arresting the drug induced driver of the Honda — who had apparently held up a convenient store moments before ramming the bus — than they were in checking on the overturned tour bus. It would take the EMTs who arrived after to care about the well being of the inadvertent victims. The eight counts of vehicular man-slaughter added to the Honda driver's charges would later mean nothing to the two year old survivor, D'Amber, but in the minds of the public it served as justice.

Dr. Williams watched her play in the hospitals nursery while they waited on the state officials to come and take her away. She'd be resigned to state care until she was old enough to receive her Father's estate. At least that would have been her fate had she not began to writhe and twist in pain in that moment. The doctor rushed into the nursery to console the girl. The Doctor rushed her to the intensive care unit as soon as he felt the wet, red patch spreading across the back of her shirt.

The peculiarities would begin from there.

Two weeks before D'Amber's disappearance:

"Morning Pat," Dr. Williams greeted the psychiatrist, Doctor Patricia Hart. "How's our little angel today?"

"Well..." Dr. Pat took a sip of coffee, "The little angel won't come down from the ceiling and she is having a meltdown over some Facebook comments. She is still refusing to see any of her tutors. She wants to go to a 'real school'. I'm telling you Forest, I just don't know how you're going to keep a young woman locked up like this all her life."

"Once she can demonstrate control, I don't have a problem releasing her. This isn't a jail Pat."

"Yeah...well convince the teenager of that." Pat said stirring cream into the warm coffee. "Good luck today. She's in rare form. I'm late for an appointment. See ya tomorrow."

"Have a good one Pat. Tell Rob hello for me."

Doctor Williams heard the screaming from down the hall and ran the rest of the way to her room.

"GET YOUR HANDS OFF ME!!!" yelled D'Amber before biting the hand of the orderly who was trying to administer a sedative. As the man yanked back away from the tussle in pain, one of D'Amber's massive, seven-foot long wings sprung out pinning another of the nurses to the adjacent wall. She had little control over them still, even with fourteen years of training and experience. But who among them really knew how to train a girl with wings?

Using all six of her limbs she broke free of the group of nurses and assistants. Her feet never touched the ground as she swung off of the gurney they were trying to strap her to. In a flash she came towards Dr. Williams who stood in the doorway. "Dad move!" She yelled out.

He saw the pain in her face as she tried to turn her body away. The wings disregarding any commands she gave them to avoid crashing into the Doctor. Without control over the flight path she outstretched her arms and legs crashing into and bracing against the doorframe. She strained against the momentum of the wings. The orderlies convened on her, immediately restraining the beating wings. Dr. Williams knelt down and stroked her hair as he had always done to calm her down, he ordered them to put the sedative away, "Just strap the wings...leave her be."

D'Amber began to sob, hugging Dr. Williams leg as the nurses placed the custom made wing strap on her. When they were finished the Doctor helped her to her feet and ushered her to her room. The entire facility was dedicated to Dr. Williams's study of D'Amber and the feathery growth on her back. The wings were attached to her spinal cord and fed off of its fluids; amputation would be a fatal procedure, so she was resigned to learning to live with them. After years of trying to help her control them, they'd only managed to discover that the wings responded in intensity based on her mood. Her and the wings's outburst had been getting worse as the woes of being a teenage girl who could fly weighed on her.

“You have practice soon right?” Dr. Williams questioned.

D’Amber wiped the tears from her eyes, and looked down at her watch. “Oh shoot!! I’m late—”.

Dr. Williams watched as she ran to the band room, she was the drummer in an amateur band called ‘Sacred Dark’. They met and played exclusively online. The fan base they had was growing steadily along with their play, the Doctor knew how frustrating it must be for her not to ever see them or her band mates in person. Her life was completely digital outside of the facility walls. Of course she felt trapped, imprisoned even. What could he do to give her some semblance of a real teenage life at this point?

Two weeks later he would give her that semblance. The only instruction he’d given her the day before was to wear her favorite outfit and to be prepared. She had begged and pleaded for him to just tell her what was happening, “It’s not even my birthday! Just tell me. I promise I’ll still like it Dad!!”

“Just be ready tomorrow okay...”

“Ugggh,” she threw herself back onto her bed not even minding to move her long dreadlocks out of her face as she mumbled through them. “You know I don’t like surprises.

Dr. Williams had invited Sacred Dark to the facility and setup a makeshift garage for them to live stream a performance. It was a huge deal for D’Amber to finally meet the band in person. She cried tears of joy when they yelled out surprises. Cupcakes and sodas were enjoyed, they talked to the fans who’d joined in on the live chat and even played a game of truth or dare before they settled down to begin the live concert.

In all his years as her caretaker, Dr. Williams had never seen such joy in her eyes and smile. She was truly the light of the ‘Sacred Dark’. Her vibrant laughter filled the lab-tech constructed garage with festiveness.

“This is a historic moment for Sacred Dark, family!” The leader singer Gary addressed one of the three cameras, “So were gonna put on our greatest show ever! Y’all ready?!”

D’Amber struck the cymbals repeatedly, faster and faster, for a full bar before Sacred Dark engulfed the entire facilities ear drums with their most popular song, ‘Raining Fire’.

The band wailed on going through song after song. Giving the nine-thousand online fans their all. D’Amber didn’t notice her wings pop out. Everyone else did, including Dr. Williams. “Open the door, open the door!” He ordered the lab technician.

He started for her but she continued playing and shook her head profusely. She pointed her drumstick out towards the 50-inch monitor that displayed the bands viewing statistics. The views

were shooting up. The drumming angel was going viral. The band started playing harder and louder.

They eclipsed a million views in less than five minutes after her wings had so abruptly emerged. They jutted out proudly behind her as she laid absolute work on the hi-hat and snare.

Then it happened. Faster than anyone could react. "Let's get some air in here!!" Gary yelled dancing towards the pseudo-garage door.

"Gary No!!!" The doctor yelled, but his words were too late.

Gary slung the door open, drowning the room in sunlight.

"Nooooo!!" D'Amber shrieked as the wings carried her towards the opening at breakneck speed. Dr. Williams and her band mates scrambled to grab hold of her. The doctor managed to get a hold of her forearm. The wings, for the first time feeling the freedom of open air, showed their full strength and weight. Dr. Williams's feet were lifted off the ground and just like that she slipped from his grip. The wings jettisoned her away, she went speeding into the air like a skydiver without a parachute would barrel towards the ground. It happened quickly and all they could do was watch her float away, at the mercy of the parasitic wings.

The band and Dr. Williams stared up until she was no longer visible. Dr. Williams alone stared until night fall, long after the band left, long after the lab technicians left, long after she'd left him.

"Come on Doc...", Dr. Patricia consoled, "Me and Rob will drive you home."

Dr. Williams couldn't resist as she led him to the car. He stared out the window into the night sky as they drove. He clutched the feathers tightly. They would not leave his possession until he buried them.



Ten Years Later:

The news reports and social media buzz flooded every news feed around the world. Anyone who claimed to have seen the 'Sacred Dark Angel' went viral almost instantly. Dr. Williams, who was now fully grayed and retired, found a mix comfort and disgust in the legends people posted of her online...even if they were all fake.

He scoffed at the TV; this time it hit too close to home. There were these two potheads claiming to've been rescued from their overturned Jeep by the 'Sacred Dark Angel'. They weren't the first and definitely wouldn't be the last people to make such absurd claims.

There were reports out of third world countries claiming a winged-woman had brought their villages food and water. People stood outside of burning buildings telling news stations that the Black Angel had saved them. There were Internet forums and blogs dedicated solely to her. D'Amber had become the modern version of Big Foot or flying saucer sightings. Social media sites boomed with traffic about her and the heroics she was supposedly involved in.

It was the anniversary of her disappearance, Dr. Williams clicked the TV off, grabbed the prepared bundle of flowers and made his way to the door. The doctor's knees went weak as he reached for the door, the pain clenched in his chest like a fist; light-headed and dizzy, he dropped to floor.

Years of being a medical professional told that he was having a heart attack. The doctor reached for his cell phone but could not remember how to dial 9-1-1. The phone fell from his weak grasp and he began to slip in and out of consciousness.

She stood over him, her hand out stretched, he took it. Immediately his strength returned, the tightness in his chest alleviated. No longer nauseous or delirious he tried to speak.

The Black Angel held a finger up to her lips and graciously accepted the bundle of flowers. She was different now, her skin had gone from a beautiful cocoa-brown to a now a deep black. Black as the night sky. Black as the view behind closed eyelids. Black as the universe. Her unnaturally dark toned body was adorned in gold. Gold bracelets, gold necklace and earrings, a golden headband tying back her gold-beaded locs. She even wore a golden chest plate of armor, with golden bands across her forearms that matched the golden shoulder plates. She had golden, tribal-like tattoos that spiraled and shimmered with their own light going up her arms and around her neck. Her large wings spread out behind her; strong, bright and proud as ever.

Dr. Williams took in the spectacle before him, breathing heavily. He had truly raised an angel on earth.

She leaned down and whispered into his ear, "Thank you." With that she turned and flew off into the afternoon sky.

Dr. Williams stared at her navigate the sky with the grace and expertise that no human would ever know after her. He stared until she was no longer visible. He remained there until nightfall, staring up at the sky.