

“POISED TO EXPLODE!”

by

Jeff Siegel

We gathered backstage at the crack of dawn, blissfully unaware of the impact that a chipper chihuahua with a bursting bladder would soon have on the most important product launch in our company's history.

To my immediate left stood our company leader, one of the industry's most influential sales executives. His foreboding presence was amplified exponentially by His formidable girth. He was a big man to begin with, standing in at just over six-foot-four. But years of two-martini lunches, three-martini dinners and enough red meat to stampede an Oklahoma stockyard had handily aided and abetted His ascent to three bills of body weight and then some. His ample salt-and-pepper mane was high and tight, a pseudo-pompadour frozen in time and space by the unmistakable staying power and vintage scent of Vitalis. And the gaudiness of His garish bracelets and His ostentatious cuff links was surpassed in size only by the enormity of His brass belt buckles.

Today, after establishing an unmatched legacy in the business, He was about to deliver the most important speech of His career. I was playing a small part in it – wordsmithing the thing – and to be honest, I was so nervous that I barely heard the voice of the *Forbes* reporter standing next to me.

“How did a nice guy like you end up writing speeches for the Big Guy?” the voice asked after the Big Guy stepped away for a moment to – in his words – “drain the boa constrictor”.

I looked up and saw Lindsey Greenfield aiming her question at me like a high caliber slug from a gun. Lindsey was a super-sharp, neatly coiffed, middle-aged woman with years of journalistic and life experience. From the get-go, it was clear that she'd done her homework, and had Him figured out before her plane touched down in Orlando. Her plan was to lavish a ten thousand word spread on Him in the *Innovators* edition of *Forbes* with the title, “*The Man with the Plan is a Sales Superman!*” – though, as fate would have it, that particular angle would never make it to print.

Lindsey was definitely a skillful interviewer, and I knew I had to be careful how I characterized *my* role in Superman's success.

“Oh ... hi,” I said, trying to focus. “The truth is, I kind of stumbled into speechwriting.”

“Stumbled, huh?”

I could tell she was secretly writing a sidebar on me in the back of her mind, so I went on. “Yeah, a long-time buddy of mine asked me to help out his dad with a speech he had to give at a sales meeting.”

“And the rest is history?”

“Sort of.” I gave her a shrug. “I kind of took to it. I had a knack for it right out of the gate, and started writing speeches as a freelancer.”

“I can relate.”

“Anyway, one thing led to another, as they say, and I networked into my first assignment for Him. I was a last-minute fill-in. Which kind of makes sense now if you think about it.”

Lindsey was nodding. “I know what you mean.”

“I remember Him saying, ‘I’m sure you’d like more time to get this fuckin’ job done, but guess what? Every day ain’t fuckin’ Christmas’.”

Lindsey chuckled. “I can just hear Him saying that.”

“Anyway, within a few months, He offered me a permanent gig as His full-time speechwriter.”

What I didn't tell Lindsey was that it was a terse, no-nonsense offer, accompanied by another one of His trademark tactics: He leaned in and glared at me, saying nothing for what seemed like an eternity ... before glaring even harder. Feeling like my personal safety was in jeopardy, I took the job, no questions asked.

That was six years ago, and now, here we were together again for the umpteenth time, ready to bestow our collective magic – His bombast, my words – on another audience eagerly anticipating His latest performance.

For now, there was still much to be done before doors opened. Sound checks, last-minute lighting adjustments, and the all-encompassing cue-to-cue rehearsal. Simultaneously, there'd be the non-stop flurry of backstage activity. But after last night, nobody – and I mean *nobody* – was thinking about the chihuahua anymore. This would soon shortly change.

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The backstage area at a major corporate meeting is a precisely laid out matrix of subdivisions that cater to the needs of a variety of constituents. At the center of the footprint is what's known as "Video Village". It's Mission Control for the Production team, with TV monitors piled high and electronic gear galore.

Along the back wall you'll find the Green Room, neatly curtained off and home to the company's execs and other esteemed guests as they primp and prep for their mainstage presentations. It's filled with comfy couches and a variety of amenities, and is as much a social gathering hub as anything else.

And off to one side of backstage is craft services, folding tables stocked with snacks, coffee and other assorted beverages, primarily for the working crew.

For the Big Guy, however, backstage was His personal theater, a grand stage upon which the spotlight shined bright and exclusively upon Him. It was here that He conducted His wide-ranging pre-show business – holding court, imparting wisdom to one and all, and generally working the crowd.

That's why He was perpetually the first to arrive, at times necessitating a crew member to be summoned from his or her room as early as 4:30 AM to unlock the ballroom doors for Him.

His directive to me was crystal clear: I was *always* to be by His side throughout the course of His backstage exploits. To cater to any needs that might arise, writing-related or otherwise. To serve as His sounding board. To do *whatever* He needed me to do.

Today, given the magnitude of the event that was taking place, He was operating at a fevered pitch, even for Him.

"Good morning," I greeted Him as he returned from draining His boa constrictor.

"It's fucking Labor Day," He roared, "let's get to work."

We headed toward the Green Room. He stopped dead in His tracks as we approached craft services.

"What the fuck is this?" He boomed, pointing to a tray of whole grain energy bars surrounded by a cannister of granola and a selection of freshly sliced fruit.

"I believe those are today's heart-healthy options," I explained.

“Where’s the fucking bacon?” He blasted back.

“I’ll have them bring out a tray immediately,” I quickly assured Him, clutching my script to my chest as though it were a pair of de-fib paddles and I was about to go into cardiac arrest.

“And eighty-six that other shit,” He directed, “no show of mine is gonna have pussy food, especially on a day when we’re gonna make history.”

None of us knew it at that point, but His Holiness was about to be proven correct yet again. Though not in a way that anyone anticipated, including the Big Man Himself.

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He was born to be a salesman, that much was obvious from the very first time I met Him. The old joke goes that a great salesman can sell ice to an Eskimo; in His case, He’d then upsell the Eskimo into an igloo ... at ten times fair market value.

His meteoric rise to the very top of the sales universe began in college. In the summer between His junior and senior years, He took a part-time job doing live demos at the local mall for a cookware company. He’d set up a mini-kitchen display smack dab in the middle of the promenade and, every hour on the hour, He’d do a 20-minute pitch hawking premium pots and pans.

They gave Him a script to work off of, but in no time at all He began to modify it to His liking, turning it into a tawdry mix of persuasion, seduction, and above all else, bluster.

He threw in a bunch of borderline suggestive jokes about the cucumbers and the mangoes that were part of His routine. He incorporated boorish one-liners designed to initiate schmoozing with the housewives in the front row. He spun tales about how the iridium used to forge these fine specimens was one of the rarest metals in the Earth’s crust, and came directly from an exclusive mine in the Limpopo region of South Africa. Then, at the end of His pitch, He’d draw upon His innate, God-given ability to close the deal. To make people buy *whatever* He was selling. No matter how much it cost. No matter if they did *or didn’t* truly want *or need* it.

Fresh out of college with a degree in Mechanical Engineering (go figure), He landed at, of all places, an encyclopedia company. There, he forcefully employed a

combination of street smarts, hyper-effective sales tactics (that often pushed ethical boundaries to their breaking point, and beyond), and the frequent barrage of good old-fashioned intimidation. The result was a world-class sales force, the likes of which those saddled with the previously ultra-low-rent reputation of the door-to-door encyclopedia trade had only dreamed of.

It wasn't lost on anyone in the business world. Recruiters came calling, day and night. They wined Him, they dined Him. They offered Him the stars, the moon, and the keys to a new kingdom. But to the books He remained true, and with good reason. His status, His reputation, and His rule over the encyclopedia dynasty that He had personally built gave him damn near free reign, and an intoxicating level of power and influence.

But then came the Feminine Products people, and they would not be deterred. They first came calling, guns a blazing, after hearing the Messiah speak at the Direct Selling Association's flagship event and, for the first time in almost twenty years, He seemed willing to entertain an offer. Perhaps it was because He was savvy enough to see the handwriting on the wall, that the encyclopedia business about to be turned upside down by computers and digital media.

At first, to those on the outside looking in, the very thought of peddling products that cater to a women's private parts seemed completely antithetical to everything He stood for. All of His machismo and His balls-out bravado and yes, His unveiled chauvinism, seemed like it would function as Kryptonite in the land of tampons or, as He referred to them during His very first interview, "lady sticks" and "blood plugs".

Then they flashed the numbers, and a package of perks that would've made even the most loyal encyclopedia enthusiast start burning books. When push came to bankbook, as He'd made a career out of broadcasting far and wide, *money* talked. The deal was done, and they gave the Anointed One the richest compensation package in the company's history.

To the surprise of no one, He immediately began to shape the company in His image. From day one, every communique released over His signature bore His unmistakable coarseness: "*We will be the Leader in Feminine Hygiene. Period.*"

More than seven years later, in spite of His gruffness and His political incorrectness and His thoroughly unorthodox approach to all things business, the results

spoke for themselves: the company's numbers skyrocketed under His leadership. Sales piled on top of even greater sales, and acquisition after acquisition further fueled the results, quarter after quarter, fiscal year after fiscal year. He had become, as Wall Street so eloquently christened Him, the "Tampon Titan".

But the best was yet to come (or at least that was the plan). And that's why we were here in Orlando.

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I peeked through the curtains and into the empty house. The giant graphics hyping the theme for our Product Launch were splashed everywhere: "*Poised To Explode!*"

I heard Him calling my name. Turning around, I saw Him standing by the Green Room, glazed donut in hand, about to be approached by the President of our Japanese parent company, Mr. Okada. I hurried to His side just as He yelled my name again, and just as Mr. Okada was beginning to engage Him.

I'd met Mr. Okada just twice before. In many ways, he was the personification of the traditional Japanese approach to business. That is, measured, cautious and conservative. In other words, everything *our* Fearless Leader wasn't.

To Mr. Okada, the captain of his U.S. unit was a brute, a spotlight-hogging creature forever obsessed with His own self-promotion. That in itself worked in direct opposition to the Japanese mantra that the *team* takes precedence over *any* individual.

But the Big Man was delivering BIG numbers. Our sales operation had become the parent company's cash cow. And in yet another testament to the Japanese way of evaluating the performance of their holdings, the skyrocketing ROI from our U.S. business was all the justification that Mr. Okada needed to tolerate his American commander, brutally rough edges and all.

"Please explain to me the meaning of your meeting slogan," Mr. Okada was asking as I joined the fray.

His inquiry was understandable. You see, the last time Mr. Okada made a personal appearance at one of our company meetings, the theme was another of the Big Guy's legendary creations. He came up with it after a lengthy, overseas plane trip during which He binged on a movie marathon that included "*Full Metal Jacket*", "*Platoon*" and

“*The Dirty Dozen*”. Upon landing in Tokyo, He immediately called me, triumphantly declaring that he had decided upon the theme for the upcoming National Sales Meeting: “*ATTACK!*”

“Attack *what?*” I had asked sheepishly.

“Attack fucking EVERYTHING”, He roared back at me.

Fittingly, the over-the-top “*ATTACK!*” images that were part of that meeting’s opening video had been enough to give Mr. Okada reason for pause; the evening entertainment themed around a politically questionable “*Kamikaze ATTACK!*” had prompted him to demand an immediate ceasefire.

Now, we were “*Poised To Explode!*”, and Mr. Okada was clearly perplexed.

“Come on, it’s all about *blowing up* the fucking marketplace,” He began to patronizingly explain to Mr. Okada. “And then there’s the clever fucking nod to what this product is gonna *do* for our lady customers, if you know what I mean”.

Mr. Okada clearly didn’t. “You are not concerned with the *other* meanings for this slogan?” he followed up.

At that moment, Mr. Okada’s assistant, Ms. Tanahashi, pulled me aside.

“In our language,” Ms. Tanahashi explained, “your slogan may be interpreted differently.”

Ms. Tanahashi went on. “The Japanese translation of your slogan may be interpreted as a human heart bursting during a catastrophic medical event ... or a blast of gastrointestinal release.”

“Really?” I asked, feeling somewhat embarrassed for all of us. Ms. Tanahashi nodded.

This being the case, Mr. Okada’s distressed look was, once again, understandable.

It didn’t deter the Big Guy, however. “Trust me, our *American* people will understand exactly what it fucking means,” blatantly emphasizing the word *American*.

“Yes,” Mr. Okada said simply, communicating neither agreement nor acceptance, but rather a begrudging acknowledgement of the latest theme debacle.

Having made his point to his satisfaction, Mr. Okada nodded subtly and moved on. His composure would prove to be a valuable asset in a matter of hours.

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No sooner did Mr. Okada head off, Betsy popped backstage. As the head of Marketing, she was responsible for shaping the way this blockbuster new product would roll out in the marketplace. More important, when it came to the dynamic of the company's Leadership Team, it was a not-so-secret secret that Betsy had been having a longstanding affair with her boss. A voluptuous, statuesque blonde with ample cleavage that was always dramatically showcased, Betsy worshipped the very ground He walked on.

"Hey Big Guy," she oozed, her bright red lipstick dancing to the beat of her exaggerated stroking, "ready to knock 'em dead today?"

"That's what I fucking do," He replied condescendingly.

It was par for the course when it came to how He treated women.

Besides Betsy, there was His wife of almost 25 years, Rhonda, who He perpetually referred to as "the only size two with tits and an ass". For Him, it was the ultimate compliment. For Rhonda, it appeared to be some sort of sad affirmation.

Then there was the on-again, off-again *affaire de Coeur* with the twenty-something administrative assistant, Christine. This seemed limited to two-to-three-day, out-of-town getaways, when He'd borrow Christine to provide "clerical support" on the road.

And there were the one-offs, strictly for entertainment's sake, like the private performance for a select group of execs that He choreographed in His master suite at the Ritz in Dallas. Legend has it that He came up with the idea Himself, and that it included a salacious sales manager from Cincinnati, a waterpik, and a box of Alka-Seltzer. Unless you were there, the specifics were, thankfully, left to one's imagination. Even Betsy was mildly upset when she heard about that one.

"I'm sure you've got something *very* special planned for us today," Betsy continued to pander to Him.

"Do you need something??" He asked gruffly. "Otherwise I've got more important fucking things to do," stopping her dead in her tracks and officially dismissing her.

Important indeed, as we would very shortly be “*Poised To Explode!*” And it was about an hour-and-a-half before doors that we were summoned to the Green Room yet again.

This time, we were informed by one of His underlings that the head of Public Relations urgently needed to see Him. Business, as they say, was about to pick up.

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Many in the company were convinced that John Robles had been leading our PR efforts since well before menstruation became a thing. A short, squat man, he possessed a globe-shaped head that always sported a peculiar reddish tint, no doubt the by-product of elevated blood pressure brought on by a never-ending onslaught of stress, both genuine and exquisitely manufactured.

Furthermore, if a Press Release could walk and talk, it would be Robles. In that manner, he broke the unsettling news of our number one competitor’s efforts to tarnish the Big Man’s even bigger day.

“MaxiFlow announced earlier this morning their planned release of a voluminous package of Social Media content specifically focused on parodying, taunting and generally deriding our imminent product release. The drop will occur at 1:00 PM Eastern to coordinate with our official Product Launch.”

Many execs would have just let something like this go, writing it off to the age-old belief that there’s no such thing as bad publicity. But not Him. In his mind, this was a targeted *personal* attack. Or at least He believed that to be the case. And really, that’s all that mattered.

Standing directly next to Him, I could literally feel the heat radiating, His level of agitation skyrocketing in a flash. “Fuck them!!!” he barked. “They’re the fucking fire hydrant!!!”

I knew precisely what he was referring to, though Robles clearly had no idea.

Robles went on in his best *Press-Release-ese*. “From what I’ve been able to ascertain, Sir, I’m afraid that there are some rather unflattering images of you involved.”

“Like?” He burst forth.

“Specifically, Sir, it appears that they’ve created an animated character that features your face atop a woman’s, uhhhhh..... a woman’s sex gadget, errrrrrr ... a woman’s sex toy, Sir.””

The complexion of Robles’ forehead morphed to maroon. Never one to be outdone, the Big Guy’s face flamed fire-engine red. To no one’s surprise, He erupted.

“You unleash a fucking full-on media assault in response,” He commanded, though no one, including Robles, had any idea as to what that could, would or should entail.

“And YOU,” He exploded menacingly at me, “put the fucking dog back in!!”

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We exited the Green Room to find Lindsay waiting outside. Upon hearing the thunderous commotion emanating from within, she’d made a beeline from craft services, where she’d been collecting background material from one of the crew.

She pulled me aside. “What’s going on?”

“MaxiFlow is poking the bear again,” I explained, “and the bear ain’t happy.”

“Specifically?” she probed.

“Specifically, they’re dropping a bunch of social media later today, all designed to steal His thunder. He doesn’t deal well with that kind of stuff.”

“So now what?” She knew something was up, and that it was going to likely make for a great story. She was right.

“So now I’ve got to make sure that we put the dog back in.”

“The dog??”

“I’ll explain. Gimme a minute. I gotta jump on the phone.”

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I feverishly worked the phone tracking down Wolfgang, the Mad Scientist of dog trainers, whom we had sent packing immediately after rehearsals wrapped up the night before. That decision was made after Robles received a threatening call from someone claiming to be with PETA, working off an anonymous tip. Only after His legal team convinced Him to back down, the Big Man begrudgingly agreed to ax the bit. Until now.

Fortunately, Wolfgang was still on the hotel property. He agreed to hightail it back it to the ballroom, chihuahua in tow.

Lindsey was hovering close by, intent on learning more about this unfolding drama.

“Okay, here’s the deal,” I began to explain, “For all of our big meetings and events, He insists on some type of outrageous, attention-grabbing onstage spectacle that will, as He puts it, *‘Burn this fuckin’ moment into their fuckin’ brains’*”.

“I see,” Lindsey went along, “that’s sweet. For example?”

“Well, there was the time when He had His wife, Rhonda, pop out of a giant birthday cake showcasing a tray of products from the new line extension, sort of like Vanna White.”

“Progressive,” she said, tongue-in-cheek.

“At another meeting He concocted a bit where He was encircled onstage by an army of little people, though He persisted in referring to them as ‘midgets’. They surrounded Him and attempted to mount an assault, unsuccessfully of course. It all had something to do with, as always, dominating the competition.”

“I’m getting the picture,” she mused, “and today?”

At that moment, Wolfgang burst through the backstage door, cradling Charlie the Chihuahua. Lindsey’s eyes widened.

“You’re in for a real treat,” I promised her, “just as long as the PETA police don’t raid the ballroom.” As it turned out, that would’ve been a more preferable turn of events.

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This wasn’t the first time He expected us to pull something off that was a combination of next-to-impossible, ludicrously unnecessary, and strictly intended to assuage His gigantic ego and His insatiable appetite for creating a huge scene.

I thought they were unnecessary, even silly. But, the fact remained, they always seemed to be what people talked about in the days to follow.

So now, thanks to His latest creative inspiration, we were attempting our most ambitious onstage extravaganza yet.

He'd come up with this one shortly after we began mapping out His keynote presentation. I had suggested positioning this ground-breaking product introduction as a stellar example of proactive market leadership. It triggered an expression I'd heard Him use before: "*You're either the dog or you're the fire hydrant.*"

Within minutes, the Production team received their marching orders. Wolfgang, we were told, was *the* guy when it came to conceiving and executing an animal act that was at best, unprecedented and at worst, animal abuse.

A video call ensued shortly thereafter, during which Wolfgang launched into a very methodical outline of the steps that would need to be taken to make this bit work, from the logistical to the biological. He spoke slowly, and with a German staccato that seemed to inject just a smidgen of sanity into the *insanity* of what was being proposed.

"This will be an unusual performance, to be sure," understated the Mad Scientist, "but if any in my pack are capable of executing it successfully, let there be no doubt that Charlie is the Chosen One."

Wolfgang then hoisted up to the camera a charming chihuahua with a rounded apple head and upright, erect ears.

Wolfgang proudly made the introduction. "Meet Charlie!"

On cue, Charlie proceeded to play to the camera, delightfully poking his tiny nose out, bewitchingly batting his luminous eyes, and generally conveying a spunky personality and a penchant for showmanship.

With that, Charlie officially became a member of our Product Launch team.

Less than a month later, Wolfgang and Charlie joined us for the pre-show rehearsal on the night before the momentous Opening Session. Charlie indeed executed his role admirably, while Wolfgang filled us in on all of the intricate planning, training regimens and trial runs that he and Charlie had endured in order to get us to this point.

Both Wolfgang and Charlie were genuinely disappointed when the result of their weeks of grueling preparation was torpedoed by "those *bananenbiegers* at PETA". But now, thanks to the bear having been poked and the bear's impetuous, vengeance-driven response, here we were, flying in the face of the legal team's counsel.

I filled in Wolfgang on what he needed to know, specifically that the performance was back on and he needed to mobilize accordingly.

“No problem,” Wolfgang assured me, “this is Charlie we’re talking about!”

Feeling confident that we were back on track, I found the Big Man huddling with Lindsey again. He was railing.

“The motherfuckers who run that shit show over at MaxiFlow are about to find out what happens when you fuck with the wrong guy. So pay attention, honey. You’re not gonna wanna miss a single fucking moment of it when I rip their fucking hearts out and shove ‘em down their fucking throats!”

I’d seen Him seethe before, but even for Him, this was a scary level of outrage.

Lindsey sought more info. “Does this have something to do with the dog?”

“It has *everything* to do with not fucking with me, sweetheart. The dog is icing on the fucking cake.”

Clearly, the thought of his face atop a giant, dancing vibrator had hit a nerve, and a big one at that. To what extent, not a one of us could have imagined.

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With less than a half-hour to the start of the festivities and in accordance with his master plan, Wolfgang indicated that it was time to administer Charlie’s final prep.

“We must now initiate the closing round of hydration,” he said confidently.

I watched as Wolfgang appeared to force-feed Charlie his concluding water intake, the diminutive dog’s bulging eyes seeming to expand in sympathy with his bladder.

To his credit, Charlie hung in there like a champ, gulping ferociously to keep up with the relentless flow of liquid that was gushing into his tiny mouth, and fighting through the occasional tremble that was quite obvious to me. Perhaps Charlie truly was the Chosen One.

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With no disrespect to Charlie, despite all that the *real* Big Dog had accomplished since landing here almost a decade ago, this product was intended to be His crowning moment. He was about to make history yet again, and like never before.

He claimed the idea first came to Him when He walked in on Rhonda, pleasuring herself in their marital bed. That fact alone was enough to mortify most of us, but in true fashion, He didn't stop there.

On the bed to Rhonda's left, He matter-of-factly added, was the tampon she had removed prior to commencing her personal nurturing.

"I don't wanna interrupt the fucking party," He snidely commented, "but it's nice to see that at least you took your fucking coochie q-tip out first."

She barely acknowledged Him and continued her business.

At that point, He alleges, as He gazed upon the Holy Trinity of His wife, her sex toy and her tampon, a giant light bulb went off: *Did these two very natural female acts need to be separate and apart? Did one mandate distancing and segregation from the other? Could they not co-exist, even ENHANCE one another??*

"Just like peanut butter and fucking chocolate," He reasoned.

Two nights later, He strolled into their bedroom, brandishing a contraption that He had spent the better part of the evening haphazardly jerry-rigging.

"Do me a favor," he asked nonchalantly, in the same casual way He might've asked her to whip up a pot roast, "see if you can get yourself off with this thing."

Rhonda stared at the intimidating instrument he was shoving in her face, initially unsure what it was. But as He got even closer she saw that He had affixed a tampon to some kind of mini-vibrator, using duct tape and string. Specifically, it was a "lipstick vibrator", as Betsy had enlightened Him when He turned to her, of all people, for counsel.

"Are you serious?" Rhonda asked, knowing full well that He was.

"Yeah, just shove the whole fucking thing inside and lemme know if it makes you cum."

"It's for work," He added, attempting some sort of comforting validation.

"I'll give it my best shot," Rhonda responded dumbfoundedly.

Though there is no official documentation of what transpired next, apparently Rhonda was able to close the deal.

The very next day, He gave R&D their most consequential marching orders yet: Develop a tampon with a built-in vibrator.

To a person, they thought He was out of His mind, though at this point they knew better than to push back. Instead, they feigned a forced mix of astonishment and admiration, and went to work.

Six months later, the VibroMax was born.

As the Almighty emphatically proclaimed to the industry, the marketplace, the press, Wall Street, and most important, to women ‘round the world, it was “*a marvel of modern science and product engineering*” – a fully-functioning tampon that could produce a variable level of vaginal stimulation for the sole purpose of providing sexual pleasure.

Better yet, the VibroMax was equipped with a Bluetooth feature, enabling the user to control it from their smartphone. Any place, anywhere, any time. Science had truly outdone itself.

The early market research, as well as the test results collected from focus groups nationwide, skewed overwhelmingly in one direction: Women of every age, shape, size, race, religion, and sexual orientation were universally united in their sentiments; they were, as our Product Launch would eventually adopt as its theme, “*Poised To Explode!*”

He was ecstatic, emboldened like never before by this MAJOR breakthrough. This would be, He had no doubt, His lasting legacy. Hundreds of years from now, He expounded, they’d be talking about Him as the industry legend who was responsible for...

“*Happy twats!*”, as He pronounced to those of us on the inside. “From this point forward that’s what we’re ALL about.”

Happy twats, indeed.

He confidently and predictably guaranteed that the VibroMax would become “*the biggest blockbuster product in the history of feminine hygiene. Period.*”

And now, at its official Product Launch, the magnificent spectacle that He had conceived to accompany the VibroMax’s coming-out party was no less grandiose.

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Fifteen minutes out, I asked the King of Kings if He was ready to go.

“Make sure that they get it all, *every* fucking camera angle,” was all He said in response, “I want the entire fucking world to see this.”

As the original script laid out, He’d start by emphasizing the VibroMax’s role in not just beating the competition senseless, but *obliterating* them in this winner-take-all, corporate death match.

Then, He’d set things in motion by nailing the payoff line: “*You’re either the dog or you’re the fire hydrant*”.

At that point, the Backstage Manager would cue Charlie the Chihuahua.

Charlie would scamper across the stage, approaching Him from stage right, settling within inches of His left leg.

Charlie would then lift his right hind leg ... and blast a powerful stream of urine across His lower left extremity.

“WE are the Big Dogs!” He’d then make crystal clear, “and the fire hydrant has ‘MaxiFlow’ plastered all over it!”

The questionable logic of this particular spectacle notwithstanding, in His mind this act of mismatched symbolism would “*Burn this fuckin’ moment into their fuckin’ brains*”. Forever.

He was convinced He would send a resounding message to the assholes at MaxiFlow that they would not soon forget. On this particular point he would be proven correct.

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I watched the Backstage Manager give the Big Man a gentle nudge. He lurched forward, headed through the curtains and out to center stage, the venom and vitriol of the past hour furiously fueling His every move.

The audience cheered wildly. They screamed and they yelled and they hooted uncontrollably, until a raucous chant of “*Poised To Explode!*” broke out and lasted for what seemed like forever.

The giant video screens came alive with bone-jarring, ear-splitting images of graphic visual explosions of every conceivable kind. They grew in magnitude as the audience's chanting became even more frenzied and deafening. He savored every moment of it, repeatedly cupping His hand to His ear, Hulk-Hogan style, and egging them on even more.

This was the moment He had waited for all His career, maybe even His entire *life*.

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We'd later find out that the medical event that befell Him is called Ehlers-Danlos Syndrome. It's a condition that makes the connective tissue around major organs – like the heart – thin, fragile and susceptible to exploding under intense pressure. Ms. Tanahashi, as it turned out, had nailed it, both in English and Japanese.

But the timing of it all was *uncanny*.

At the precise moment that a meticulously trained 3.8-pound chihuahua made his onstage debut, The Big Man collapsed.

In a way, it was rather understated, not something you'd expect from The Guy who did everything BIG. Instead, He simply fell forward at the end of a sentence – oddly, “Things are about to get pretty damn crazy around here, and I'm about to show you exactly what I mean...” All things considered, I couldn't have written a more fitting set-up line.

And then, time just froze, as everyone tried to figure out what to do next.

The audience got deathly quiet, wondering if this was or wasn't part of the script.

The Production crew looked hesitantly at one another, speculating on whether He had simply gone off script again.

Everyone knew it was something that would *burn this fuckin' moment into their fuckin' brains*. Forever.

Only Charlie, exemplifying the laser focus that you'd expect from the Chosen One, was not deterred. He trotted across the stage and unleashed his swollen bladder upon the Big Guy's motionless leg. Eventually, over at MaxiFlow, they'd morbidly enjoy the karma of it all. To their perverse delight, it was indeed captured “from every fucking camera angle.”

The paramedics showed up to administer life support. But this deal had already been closed.

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The autopsy report revealed that, in the moments leading up to his catastrophic collapse, the wall surrounding the Big Man's heart repeatedly contracted and expanded at a dizzying pace, sort of like the spasmodic pulsations created by His beloved VibroMax.

The report went on to note that this triggered a volcanic eruption, kind of like what happened to the bloated bladder of His co-star, Charlie the Chihuahua, though without the scripted opportunity for release.

And finally, the report definitively concluded that His ticker experienced a massive detonation that sent colossal shock waves surging throughout His body, in the same way that His atomic sales force would go on to blow out the marketplace with their brand-new blockbuster product.

It was an extraordinary, albeit tragic story of synchronicity and self-fulfilling prophecy. Because in the end, it was the Big Guy, Himself, who had been *truly* poised to explode.

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