



Every story was different. Lucinda was a wealthy young woman with a PhD in medieval English literature, from an upper middle class family: she had money, connections, lawyers – but none of it mattered when the registry asked for her ethnic reassignment details.

She made calls, tested loopholes, but the laws were tight. Exile in the Caribbean? That was possible. But it had a price. Evade, and they'd seize everything. Generational wealth gone in a matter of days. Leaving the country to avoid ethnic reassignment was a serious crime too.

The thought of becoming brown—or worse, Black—made her feel sad, she had always been proud of her heritage and features: classic beauty, fair hair, but her wealth meant more to her. At least, she knew how to negotiate. After some discreet conversations and untraceable payments, she convinced the technicians to give her a more “selective” alteration. She considered various options like Native American, Polynesian... They were niche options that would allow her to remain somehow part of a restricted club, but would she like becoming something like that?



In the end, she chose Indian–Punjabi. Something that would allow her to keep a version of her features. In the end, she would look like an “exotic” version of herself—different enough to be accepted, but familiar enough to remain *her*.

She was still trying to imagine what an Indian version of herself would be like when the first problem began. Lucinda’s skin darkened faster than the doctors had warned. Much faster, in fact. The tone she’d been told would take weeks to reach appeared within days. Her dark blonde hair was now much darker, and her hazel eyes brown.

Her Jamaican boyfriend, Jamal, didn’t mind. He was a DJ she’d chosen in a surprising act of rebellion against her conservative background. All of her pride in her culture hid a certain admiration for anything deeply exotic. He held her hand quietly through the process, not gloating, not pitying. He told her he’d always love her, no matter what. In fact, it was hilarious that he was comforting her on her dark skin tone.



A week into the process she was already darker than she'd ever imagined, when the sweating began. By then, her complexion had passed the soft tones of northern India and settled into something deeper, more exotic. Her hair was jet black, her eyes as dark as it gets. She began mumbling about taking action but her boyfriend reassured her, recommending to rest as much as possible.

Another week in, the process intensified. The fever struck even stronger, wracking her body with a cleansing fire as the new DNA purged the old. After two weeks, she was as dark as a woman from southern India, her fine-boned features softening, broadening—melting into a stranger's face. Nobody would recognize her anymore now. She now had black hair and dark brown eyes like pretty much anybody else in the country and her skin was pretty much average in the UK. Her plan had clearly failed.

Her boyfriend Jamal still came to see her every day. She met him with wide, panicked eyes, her body trembling from more than just the fever. "This wasn't the deal," she gasped, her voice raw.



"I don't know what's happening to me! I was never supposed to get *this* dark. I'll talk to them—I'll make them fix this!"

"I'll take care of it," he had said. "You just stay here"

But he did not return the next day. Or the one after that. And the transformation, now unchecked by hope or intervention, did not stop. Her skin deepened to a dark, espresso brown. Her features continued their relentless reshaping: the elegant bridge of her nose seemed to dissolve, flattening into a new, broader shape. Her lips swelled into full, pronounced curves, and the high cheekbones that had once defined her face melted into a softer, wider structure. However much she tried to rationalize it, she could no longer even pass as a dark-skinned Indian. The reflection staring back held an undeniably African phenotype. Eventually, the fever subsided, the process settled and she began familiarizing herself with her new identity.

When he finally reappeared, she told him: "It's too late" her voice hollow as she held out her hands. "Look at me. I'm... Black."



His expression remained calm, unnervingly serene. "It's okay. I talked to them."

"And?" Lucinda whispered.

"Everything is under control. In fact," he paused, "I was the one who ordered the change."

For a moment, her mind refused to bridge the gap between the words and their meaning. Then, the truth—the profound, intimate betrayal—crashed over her. "Why?" she choked out. "Why would you do this to me?"

"Lucy, Lucy," he crooned, as if soothing a child. "Think about it. This was a great opportunity. Race always divided us. You and your family never saw me as equal to you. It was a problem before, and it would have been a problem again, even with you as a pretty, stuck-up Indian girl." He stepped closer, his gaze intense and possessive. "Now we'll both be Black. No more division. Just us." "But I'm not the same anymore..." Her voice trembled, breaking with the weight of her shattered identity. "Did you even like me before?"



The placid mask on his face slipped for just an instant. He didn't raise his voice; he lowered it into a blade of cold disapproval. "Lucy, don't," he hissed, his eyes darting around as if she were causing an embarrassment. "That's not how Black women behave. Don't be such a diva." The power dynamics had shifted among them. She nodded meekly. For the first time she felt like she fully belonged to him.

"Right... Anyway... I'm still the same person inside, I'm not... Like you!"

He smiled. "People treat you differently when you're Black, Lucy. And that will affect you. They made us believe we live in a post-racial society with all of this diversity stuff but the truth is, being Black will always be different. You see, there are many people like you now, coconuts: black outside, white inside. But that will change. You'll learn from us Black folks and integrate, become more like us, day by day."

"By the way," he added, the words casual. "I requested some fine-tuning. Your metabolism is next."



"Your body will now settle into its new... heritage. No matter what you eat, or how you train, you'll finally develop curves in all the right places." His gaze grew distant for a second. "Honestly, you always lacked them."

Lucy's hands flew to her hips and stomach, which still held the form of her lithe, familiar frame. "No! I don't want to be fat!" A slow, possessive smile carved its way across his face, utterly devoid of warmth. "You'll be a curvy queen, baby. Don't fight it, you'll grow to like it."

Later, Lucy stood frozen in front of the bathroom mirror.

More changes were still ongoing. Her breasts already felt heavier, fuller. Her gaze dropped lower. The curves were one thing, but there was something else. Her legs were longer. Her torso looked compressed.

She tried brushing her hair. The brush wouldn't go through. It snagged halfway down, tugging painfully at her scalp. "What the fuck?" she whispered.



Her phone calls home were short. Cold. No one shouted, but their words cut deeper for it. "You let him get into your head," her mother said, her voice clipped and controlled. "You've humiliated us. Look at yourself. Did you think this is a game? What were you thinking? You had everything, Lucinda. And you threw it away for some ghetto boyfriend."

She wanted to tell them he had manipulated her but she didn't want to make the situation worse than it already was. That had always been a silent tension in the family. He was so different from her. Well, not anymore, since Lucy now looked more like his cousin than theirs.

When the lawyers got involved, the message became official. A reduced trust. Limited access. Her name removed from certain holdings. She was still wealthier than Jamal, but by no means upper middle class. She has sufficient funds to survive for a full year, but with no access to her family wealth, she couldn't spend her time writing papers on Medieval literature anymore. It was hard to tell what stung more – the betrayal, or the quiet relief that came with it. She didn't need their approval anymore.



The hairdresser's fingers moved quickly but gently, parting the dense coils with practiced ease.

"4C," she said, nodding to herself. "Very coily, very tight. You're gonna need to moisturize regularly. Leave-in, curl cream, maybe a butter if it gets too dry."

Lucy sat stiffly in the chair, watching through the mirror as unfamiliar hands worked through what she still wanted to think of as *her* hair.

"And don't worry," the woman added, catching the lost look in her eyes. "You'll get used to it. You're clearly new to this." Lucy gave a faint nod, too ashamed to speak. The woman washed her hair, applied some products, and gently dried it with a cotton t-shirt. The whole process took more than an hour, and at the end, Lucy stared at her reflection. She reached up and ran her fingers through it. The texture made her stomach tighten. It felt alien – dry, springy, resistant. She forced a weak smile and thanked the woman, paid, and left without asking for styling advice. She whispered, "I miss my hair."