



Charlotte was an American businesswoman working for a large Chinese business. Being an independent thinker as she was, she quickly realised the good career perspectives she would have in East Asia already at a young age, so she decided to learn the language and to start a career in China.

However, despite her effort, she realised she was never going to get top position due to herself being an outsider.

When she confronted her boss about this, he would avoid to address the topic and encouraged her to apply for different positions. After a while, he gave in and recommended her to pay a visit to a friend of his who could help her. The man in question was a cosmetic surgeon. Surgeries performed on Asians to make their eyes look more European had already been common practice for decades, but recently as Asian women began to be perceived an equally valid beauty standard as caucasian women, the opposite was also possible. He bluntly suggested Charlotte would undergo plastic surgery to acquire the facial features of an East Asian woman.

Charlotte initially refused but kept on thinking about it and eventually conceded that a minor surgery would show how far she was going to go to integrate, maybe giving her a hint of a mixed girl look, without changing her features completely.

A trip to Korea was therefore booked, with only a small intervention to her eyes planned. However, her boss, who was a powerful businessman with deep connections with the Party, had different plans for her and gave his friend different instructions. In fact, a set of experimental cosmetic surgeries not yet available to the general public, including permanent irises darkening, eyelid surgery, hair transplant and face reconstructing were performed on her. In the new China, skilled immigrants were only welcome as long as they were truly willing to fit in with the rest of the Nation and Charlotte was going to be a leading example.

Nothing was left as it originally was to have a more convincing result: her eyelids and eyebrows got also a transplant to match her new hair colour, her skin tone was permanently altered and her body hair were nearly completely eradicated to give an even more convincing impression or really being an Asian woman.



Expecting only a minor change in her appearance, Charlotte was utterly shocked when she realised what they had done to her. She looked like a brand new woman now, with no resemblance to her true self. It felt like an extracorporeal experience: she could feel and move this body who seemed to belong to a different woman though.

On the bright side, she was going to have no problems at all integrating in the society, as she now looked like a native Asian young woman, but only now she realised the price she would have to pay.

If she was ever going to relocate back to the States, she was going to be a minority looking like that. Yet another set of cosmetic surgeries to restore her original looks was not an option as it would inevitably look fake, at the point she would look like a mature actress who had too many cosmetic surgeries.

She was planning to talk about this to her family after the surgery to avoid any direct confrontation before it was too late, so that they would have to accept the results but now she was afraid of their reactions given its extent.

The surgeon made clear that he was simply following orders from Charlotte's boss, who gave her no further explanations.

As she stared into her dark brown Asian eyes she pondered whether it had been a good deal to trade her sought-after caucasian features to blend in better in the Chinese society. Sure, the surgeons did a good job in preserving her beauty and she couldn't deny she always found Asian girls very pretty and often envied their youthful looks too but being one of them was a very big step, one she never meant to take.



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Weeks later, Charlotte's doubts had only increased.

Her career was finally going really well, she finally got the job she wanted together with a salary raise and an updated Chinese ID card updated to match her new face.

She also felt awkward opening up about this with her American friends so she began to avoid them altogether and only hang out with Chinese friends, who often complimented her on the big step she took. She became known as the American girl who turned Chinese, acquiring an unwanted popularity and being praised by everybody for her commitment in integration and her implicit acceptance of the superior beauty of Asian women.

On the other hand, her family didn't react so positively instead. In fact, her father told her she was a disgrace for her family and disowned her. "Never mind - she told herself - I'll get so rich soon anyways that sort of money won't make any difference!".





A few months later, when the surgeries had definitively settled in, she relocated to a different city and applied for a top position in the local branch of the same company as before, wanting to avoid being singled out as the American girl who turned Chinese.

Having officially changed her name to Meilin Li and presenting herself as a second generation Chinese immigrant to the States who decided to move back to China to justify her American accent while speaking Chinese, she encountered no problems. Her CV spoke for itself so she easily got the job.

She enjoyed not being seen as the American girl who had turned Chinese as before but now if she wanted to stick to this new persona she had created for herself she had to always be in character and to describe how difficult it was to grow up as an Asian American in a deeply racially divided country, how much better it was to fit in in China and how deep her connection was with the country of her ancestors.

With time, her accent got better and she began to drop any reference to the States when introducing herself to new people. She told herself she still was the American woman she had always been in the inside, but now she would forever be hidden behind a mask making her appear as Meilin Li, a mask she could never remove, even during intimate encounters, cementing her even further to her artificial new persona.