

In her image

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My name is Abigail. I come from a family with a storied history and wealth, markers of the classic WASP heritage. Yet, the fabric of my seemingly picture-perfect life began to change, weaving in threads of unexpected colors when my father, in his early 50s, found love in the arms of Shanice. She was younger than him, Black and clearly not a good match. She lacked the class of my mum, her intelligence and culture. I wish I knew why my dad was dating her. My father, a wealthy man with a long history of dating actresses, said she helped him go through his divorce, and their friendship evolved into something else. I think she was only thinking about his wealth.

I live on my own luckily, as I have started attending college, but I spent a few weeks at home during summer break and I had to spend time with her too.

She told me she and my dad were going to marry soon. I was disgusted but tried my best to hide my irritation and congratulated them. She told me I should refer to her as Mum from now on and she insisted we should spend more mother daughter bonding time. Bullshit. Anyway, one day she promised me a present: a beauty treatment!



I naively thought a beauty treatment couldn't harm me, so I accepted with enthusiasm. Perhaps she was making an effort to connect, I probably had better stop being a bitch to her, I thought.

She brought me to the beautician and, as my face was covered in a beauty mask, she directed the beautician to administer a lip injection. Before I knew it, I had was the owner of silicone-enhanced lips.

I was quite mad at her, but to be fair, the results didn't seem alarming initially - it appeared as though I had used a lip plumping gloss, nothing too dramatic. I angrily told her she should have told me but she insisted it was meant as a surprise, and that I would have never done it otherwise.

However, the substance used began to expand over the next few hours until it reached its full volume. I could feel my lips tingling but I thought they were simply adjusting to their new plumpness. When I noticed I was mispronouncing some words, I suspected something was happening.



By the time I got home, my lips looked absurdly overinflated and unnatural. Staring in the mirror, I muttered to myself in despair, "My life is over now, no one will ever take me seriously again. And all due to that bitch!"

Crossing into the living room, I ran into my dad. "Dad, look what that bitch has done to me!" I exclaimed, pouring out the whole story.

"Listen, I understand this is hard for you, and I'm really sorry about what happened to your lips," he said, his voice a mix of concern and frustration. "But look, sweetie, it's not that bad, and you need to respect Shanice, she's going to be your step-mother soon and she's genuinely trying her best to help you!"

I snapped back, "She'll never be my mum, or step-mother. To me, she's just someone you're dating, and it's only a matter of time before you see her true colors."

"Darling, please be more considerate. You know how much she's helped me through the divorce," he pleaded.

"How can you not see she's just after our money?" I retorted, frustration boiling over, and I stormed off the room, looking for Shanice.

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Frustration and disbelief colored my voice as I confronted Shanice. "How could you see this as a gift? You made me look like a pornstar! And you financed this...transformation with my family's money!"

Unperturbed by my dismay, Shanice casually brushed off my concerns. "Darling, you've got to loosen up and really start living. There's no harm in exploring a new look, and to be honest you were a bit plain."

"Plain? I... look like an escort now!" My voice cracked under the strain of holding back tears, the hurt evident in my eyes.

"You'll thank me later for that! Do you have a boyfriend?"

"I don't, at the moment," I muttered, cheeks flushing with embarrassment.

"At the moment? Well, why wait? You should find someone soon!" Shanice prodded, her tone both mocking and insistent.

"Well, I have high standards..." I responded defensively.

"Bullshit! Let me help you out. A friend of mine has a son who's looking for a girlfriend. You just need a bit of a style upgrade," Shanice plowed on, ignoring my discomfort. "What? Who is this guy? And I like my style as it is!" I retorted. Eventually, worn down by her persistence and my own conflicting emotions, I conceded. Yet, I couldn't shake off the anxiety that clung to me like a second skin. "Alright, but nothing irreversible this time, okay?" I pleaded,

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She took me, unwilling, to the local hair salon, but her energy was something else. I had to follow her. As we entered, a wave of uncertainty washed over me, my mind teeming with questions about the extent of the change ahead. Settling into the stylist's chair, I braced for something simple—a trim, maybe a slight color adjustment.

The stylist worked meticulously, applying color and then skillfully curling each strand. As the process unfolded, I could only catch glimpses of the transformation through the mirror's reflection, and I did not like what I was seeing. The anticipation built with each passing minute, a mix of curiosity and a hint of apprehension swirling within me.

When at last the stylist spun my chair around for the big reveal, I was stunned. My usually tame, light brown hair had been replaced by a vibrant tumble of dark, glossy curls that bounced around my face with a life of their own. The rich curls brought a dramatic flair that transformed not just my look but also how I felt—bolder, more audacious.

I caught my breath, trying to match my reflection with my self-image.

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After my dramatic hair makeover, I was pretty much whisked straight into a tanning booth. It seemed like the goal was to change up my look even more, but I hadn't quite grasped the full plan yet. Stepping out of that booth, I noticed my skin had taken on a golden glow that really popped with my new dark curls and plumped-up lips. Suddenly, I realised I looked like an ethnic version of myself—a huge leap from the girl I saw in the mirror just a few days ago.

Looking at myself, trying to fit all the pieces together, it slowly hit me. This wasn't just about switching up my style or getting me to try something new. Turns out, the bitch had a specific look in mind when she planned this makeover—she was shaping me to look like a passable mixed race daughter for her. This whole "fun makeover" was actually her way of morphing me into her own daughter.

"You have such nice features; we just needed to show them off a bit more, and maybe tweak your style." - Shanice said meeting me in the salon, adding a couple of loop earrings to complete my look. I was too shocked to react.

"This is insane - I told her later in the car - I'm not your daughter and will never be, no matter how many beauty treatments I'll undergo!"

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"No need to get angry now, but first, you might want to slip into this dress" - she produced a revealing outfit "Before you meet your date!"

"My date?" I stammered, having completely forgotten about the matchmaking arrangement. "I... I'm not sure I want to be seen like this... Can we maybe postpone it?"

"Nonsense, girl! You look fantastic, and I promise you two will hit it off," she encouraged with a smile.

She dropped me off in front of a pub in an unfamiliar part of town. The area didn't feel the safest, and I hesitated at the threshold, feeling out of place in my new dress. However, with nowhere else to go, I hurried inside. Here, a young man named Jayden greeted me with a friendly kiss on the cheek, his demeanor brimming with confidence. "I... This is a mistake, I never agreed to this and..." "Don't worry, just follow my lead" - he said, confidently. "Want something to drink, to relax your nerves?" As we sat down, he seemed to notice my hesitation. "Ever dated a Black guy?" I shook my head, in embarrassment. "No problem, I'll turn you into a snow bunny in no time!"

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The date went surprisingly well. Jayden was unlike any guy I had dated before. There was a natural magnetism about him, and yes, his impressive muscles didn't go unnoticed either. It was all so unexpected!

"So, how was the date?" - Shanice asked when I was back.

"So, how was the date?" Shanice asked eagerly when I got back.

I hesitated for a moment, still processing everything. I had never been into dating Black guys; frankly, it had never crossed my mind, but there was something special about Jayden. He was so confident and had this presence that was both reassuring and incredibly attractive. And his scent—subtle yet captivating. It was hard to admit, but Shanice's setup had surprisingly steered things in a direction I hadn't anticipated.

"It was great, actually! I... think I owe you an apology," I admitted sheepishly.

"No need to, I'm just happy you enjoyed it!" Shanice beamed, clearly pleased with herself, without any hint of revenge or malice. Maybe she was just trying to help me, after all.

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“But, there’s something else,” I added quickly. “The tanning session we tried was a bit too much—my skin reacted, and I haven’t had freckles like this in a long time!”

“Oh, we can fix that,” Shanice replied without missing a beat. “I’ll call a doctor friend of mine. He’s great with skincare.”

Her quick solution eased my concerns, distracted as I was by the recent date. Jayden had disrupted my usual type, and now, I found myself eager to see him again, curious to explore this new connection that Shanice had orchestrated. I didn’t care too much about Shanice’s plans.

The doc gave me what turned out to be a melanotan shot, which drastically increased melanin production in my body. Not only that, but he even enlarged my lips further with yet another silicone injection.

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After noticing the drastic changes to my skin tone following the shot, which Shanice claimed was just a simple treatment for my freckles, I quickly realized something was wrong. Within days, my skin had darkened to a uniform mocha color. Even more distressing, details like the darkening of my nipples indicated a deeper, more permanent alteration than I had consented to. The full gravity of the situation hit me hard, and with that realization came a surge of clarity. I confronted Shanice, my voice trembling with a mix of anger and betrayal. "Have you lost your mind? I look Black now!"

"Well, now that you mention it, you look kinda mixed, maybe. But hey, you look gorgeous, and that's all that matters for your man," Shanice responded nonchalantly, as if the transformation of my entire racial appearance was a trivial matter. "I might have lost my mind momentarily for that guy, but I've got my sanity back, okay? Now turn me back!" I demanded, my demand firm, reflecting the return of my self-assurance.

Shanice sighed, her tone shifting as she realized the seriousness of my demand. "Hmm, your melanin levels are going to be this high for several weeks now. You better adjust to your looks. By the way, I've bought you some new pink dresses that will complement your new complexion just fine!"

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I was shocked at the news that my change in complexion was there to stay for the time being. On the other hand, I was still quite distracted thinking about my date, more than I could admit, so I quickly donned a pink dress, eager to see how I looked in it. As I looked in the mirror, curiosity overtook my irritation. "Do you think he'll like me?" I asked Shanice, hoping for reassurance.

"Oh, you bet he will! He usually dates Black girls, so I told him I've been highlighting your black half to make you more attractive," she replied casually.

"I'm not half Black!" I responded, the frustration bubbling up again.

"Hmm, let's see, you look mixed, your mum is Black, what do you think people will think?" she retorted.

"I don't care what people think, I'm just not Black!"

"Well, if you don't really care about what people think, then why are you so bothered by your looks?" she challenged, turning my own argument around on me.

"I... I..." I faltered, searching for the right words. Despite my frustration, Shanice had made a point that hit close to home. Why was I so upset if I didn't care about others' perceptions?

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“Bye, see you later dear!” Shanice’s voice snapped me back to the present.

“Ugh! Bye, mum, I mean...” I muttered, the slip revealing how deeply Shanice’s actions had affected me, blurring the lines between personal autonomy and her overbearing intentions.

Biting my plump lips, I realised that my relationship with the Black woman had evolved into something of a somewhat conflictual mother-daughter relationship.

As I prepared myself for the date, the conflict within me churned—a mix of anticipation for the evening ahead and a deep-seated need to reclaim my identity, on my own terms. I had been effectively blacked by my step-mother. I now had the aesthetics of a mixed girl, and I was definitely into Black guys.

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Even if my story with Jayden didn't go as I was hoping, I would definitely actively search for a Black partner again. "Ugh, I can't believe how much I've changed recently" - I told myself, staring into my own reflection for a few minutes.

When my stepmother was back, she encouraged me to try on a more revealing dress "Come on, you only live once! Why don't you show off your curves more?" "Ugh, ok, I'll give it a try." "You look wonderful, my dear!" I looked indeed better in it, so I headed to my date, hoping he would still like me. We met at the same place, but I felt more comfortable walking around the few streets remaining before the pub, as one more Black lady didn't stand out as much as I did the last time around. "Wow, you look... different. Amazing, but different!" he exclaimed, his eyes searching my face as if trying to find the person he had met before.

I liked Jayden too much to risk losing him, and the fear of his potential withdrawal if I disclosed the whole truth about my transformation loomed large in my mind.

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Thus, reluctantly, I found myself echoing my stepmother's fabricated narrative. "Yeah, I've been embracing my Black side more," I ventured cautiously, feeling each word weigh heavily on my conscience. "I've started embracing my natural hair texture, spending more time in the sun, and well, I might have had a little touch-up for my lips."

"I guess I've always been envious of my mum's looks, even if I couldn't admit it," I added, the lie tasting bitter on my tongue.

Jayden smiled, seemingly satisfied with my explanation. "That's cool that you're finding yourself like this," he said, his acceptance providing a temporary relief to my gnawing guilt.

I was in love with Jayden, there was no denying that. His love made me forget my hatred towards Shanice and I gradually grew closer to her. In the meanwhile, I was embarrassed to be seen in my current sexy yet scandalous new form by my dad, so I grew distant from him. I still remembered the way I used to feel about Shanice and Black people in general and it was too embarrassing admitting how much I had changed.

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One afternoon, as I studied my reflection, my green eyes seemed to pierce back at me with a dissonance that was hard to ignore. They were the last remnants of my white ethnicity, increasingly out of sync with my altered appearance. "Is something bothering you? Something about your eyes?" she inquired gently, holding out a pair of colored contacts. "Would you like to see how you might look with brown eyes like mine?"

"They look natural, don't they? It's actually a minor surgery to make this permanent, and you'd have natural-looking brown eyes forever," she suggested, her voice filled with an encouraging tone. I gulped, the idea tempting yet terrifying. "I want them, I want to be fully Black," I admitted, my voice barely above a whisper.

"Good! I'm so proud of you, my daughter!" Shanice exclaimed, her delight clear. Her words, meant as comfort, felt heavy with implications.

The surgery was swiftly arranged, almost as if to outpace any doubts or second thoughts I might harbor. As the date approached, a mix of fear and resignation settled in. However, I told me, what difference would it make now, after everything else?

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The procedure involved coating my irises with natural melanin to achieve a genuinely brown color and, on suggestion my Shanice, implanting a melanin enhancer to darken my skin to match the rich hue often associated with Black women. This implant was designed to continuously adjust my melanin levels, ensuring that my hair would grow in black and that my skin tone and eye color would maintain their new, darker shades.

When I awoke from the surgery, my eyes were very sensitive to light, which required me to avoid fully lit environments for a few days. When I finally could face the light and look in the mirror, the changes were astonishing. The melanin had taken full effect; my skin was a deep brown, and my eyes reflected a rich, African brown hue. Looking at my reflection, I saw a beautiful and confident Black woman staring back at me.

My mother was the first to embrace me after the transformation. "Now you're really my daughter," she said. "Now your dad looks like a stepfather to you!", and I responded with a laugh, "True, haha!" Embracing this new identity finally felt surprisingly natural.