

# Hijab day - Swap

FEBRUARY 2026



The bright, vaulted ceilings of the terminal felt as expansive as the adventure she was about to begin. She was just half way through her trip, in a north African airport on her way to West Africa. She carried her luggage personally from one plane to the next given the large overlay and her fear of losing her outfits in the way.

Anja was your average German girl, pretty, with an angelic face and a slim body.

She had met Abdoulaye, a young man from Guinea, during her studies abroad, and his invitation to visit his home country had eventually led her across the globe to this very moment.



Aminata had been promised to Abdoulaye for a while but since meeting the pretty German, he couldn't stop comparing her to Anja.

She was very curvy, of course, and that was one of her strong points. One of the few, to be fair. She looked quite unremarkable otherwise. Abdoulaye found her kind, devout, the kind of woman parents would love to see married to their son. Not an exciting personality though.

Anja instead was very pretty. Abdoulaye found himself lost in her blue eyes every time they talked. And she knew so much about science, history, was vivacious, so independent. Too much to be a good wife, and she had no religion or honor.



Despite her precautions, Anja's luggage had been erroneously sent to Dakar, instead of Konakri. While her luggage was transferred to the right destination, she had been presented with an abaya and hijab belonging to Abdoulaye's younger sister that she shopped in Dubai and then left behind after getting married and gaining some weight. She looked up with a mixture of confusion and hesitation. "Are you sure this is a good idea? Abdoulaye. "It should work for a day or two. Besides, what would people see if they saw me with a woman dressed like you? In this way, you'll show respect to the local culture too and you'll get less attention".



The black abaya with a matching hijab was surprisingly pretty but also tight and uncomfortable. Anja needed some help from Abdoulaye's mum to wear it. The whole procedure was long and uncomfortable.

"It's too much!" - Anja said - "It's too covering, I don't want to be seen like this!"

"By whom, my family, my neighbors? People who don't know you anyway? They'll admire you actually."

Whatever, she thought. Not that I really have a choice until my luggage is found.



Meanwhile, a drug administered to her by Abdoulaye took effect.

Anja felt relaxed, then tired, her muscles stopped reacting to her until she fell down on a carpet. She didn't injure herself luckily.

Abdoulaye was standing a few meters away and, strangely enough, didn't react in any way. He simply looked at her and smiled. Anja quickly loses consciousness a few seconds later, still wondering what the heck was happening to her.

Abdoulaye lifted Anja up and took her to his basement, where Aminata had been trapped with an excuse. She was so much lighter than the Black girl, he noticed!



During his studies in Europe, Abdoulaye had connected with a reclusive neuroscientist dismissed from his institution for unethical experimentation. His research involved targeted memory editing using precisely timed drug cocktails paired with audiovisual conditioning. The overlay of personality traits, value systems, even subconscious preferences, by weakening certain synaptic connections and reinforcing others.

Anja had been under for a few days. In that time, she had been exposed to Aminata's recorded voice recounting family stories, Qur'anic verses, lessons on modesty and marriage, and a taste for rich, fried food. The process was crude, invasive, but it worked well enough.



Meanwhile, Aminata—locked in the same basement—had been exposed to recordings of Anja’s university lectures, feminist podcasts, and workout motivation clips.

Several hours or days later Anja woke up in the same position where she had fainted. Her eyelids fluttered open. She was lying on the same patterned carpet where she had fallen, the thick fabric of the abaya twisted softly around her legs. For a moment, she felt disoriented—as if waking from a deep, dense dream. Then, a wave of calm washed over her.

It was unfamiliar, this serenity. Her usual restlessness, that buzzing need to move and know and do, had softened into something quieter.



She noticed the way the hijab framed her face, the gentle weight of it on her head and shoulders. It felt... nice, proper. She smoothed a hand down the front of the abaya, finding comfort in its coverage.

Strange, she thought, but the thought itself was slow, patient. Her mind felt different—like a library where some shelves had been rearranged.

She thanked God for being in good health again, in fluent Arabic. The words had left Anja's lips smoothly, almost musically—a flowing Arabic phrase her mind hadn't consciously formed. Praise God for the blessing of health. beamed, replying warmly in the same language.



She froze, the spoon halfway to her mouth.

“What have I just said? What? I’m not even religious, let alone Muslim!”

The thought was sharp, wholly her own—a fragment of the old Anja, surfacing like a breath from underwater. She felt a sudden, dizzying split inside herself: the serene, modest woman who found comfort in the hijab, and the rational, secular student who would have scoffed at thanking God for anything.

The new neural pathways—the ones reinforced with recitations and traditions—pushed back gently, insistently. But it feels right. It feels peaceful.



The suitcase stood in the corner of her room. Abdoulaye stood beside it, a relaxed smile on his face.

“Hey, Anja, your luggage has arrived!”

Anja looked up. Her heart gave a little leap. “Good,” she said, “I’ll finally change out of this outfit before dinner.” Her voice was pleasant, but inside, the thought of removing the modest garments brought a surprising pang of reluctance, followed by a flush of shame at caring so much. As she stood, her eyes lingered on Abdoulaye. The afternoon light from the window caught the line of his jaw, the confident ease in his posture. “God, he looks so hot today.” - she thought, blushing.



The silver crop top was fitted and sleek, designed for rooftop parties. The matching miniskirt was short enough to let her legs show, the dark fishnet stockings a bold, fashionable choice. It was an outfit she had worn confidently just weeks ago—perfect for this climate too, she had thought packing it. It had made her feel free, modern, in control.

Now, it gave her the chills.

She turned slightly, her reflection moving with her. Her midriff was bare between the hem of the top and the waist of the skirt. Her legs, sheathed in the intricate web of fishnet, seemed on lurid display. A deep, instinctive shame tightened in her chest.

Why does it feel so weird to be dressed like this?



Her mind supplied the response, in Aminata's internalized voice, now woven into her own: *Because you are showing what should be kept for one person. Because you are inviting stares, not respect.*

She met her own eyes in the mirror. The blue was the same, but the expression was different. There was no boldness there. Only a growing horror. *I look like a prostitute.* The thought was vicious, cruel, and it didn't feel entirely her own. It was an echo of a judgment she had never before passed on herself, or on any woman. It was a judgment born of a different set of values—values that now felt embedded in her soul. *I can't let them see me like this.* What would they think?