



Shanice reached into her bag and pulled out a small bottle of cream. She pressed it into Courtney's hand as if she were giving her a gift. "Now go home and apply this" she said. "It will help with the color. You're still a bit too pale to impersonate me." Courtney stared at the bottle, numb. "Your face is almost spot on, though," she added, with a soft laugh. Courtney flinched at that. "Please. I don't want this." Shanice's smile thinned. "I didn't want to lose Dave. Now go home, use the cream. Stay inside. Don't do anything stupid." Courtney nodded and left. She took the bus home, spotting her reflection in the mirror and stopping for a few seconds. By the time she reached her apartment, her legs felt weak.



She locked the door behind her and stood closer to the mirror, searching for something familiar.

Why do I have to do this? she thought. She pictured Dave opening the door to Shanice wearing her life, her body. Shanice smiling up at him while Courtney became Frenemies, the girl outside the relationship looking in. Then another image came: Shanice snapping her fingers and Courtney's mixed body aging, sagging into some heavy old woman. No Dave, no beauty, no chance to explain. Just a body she could not escape. The thought made her stomach twist. Courtney shut her eyes. Being Shanice was terrifying. But being turned into someone ugly and old felt worse.



She picked up the cream and rubbed it onto her face. At first, nothing happened. Then the heat began. A rich brown color rose through her face, pushing the last traces of Courtney's old identity away. It spread unevenly at first, along her cheeks, over her nose. Her forehead darkened. Her chin. Even her ears, half-hidden beneath the black hair pinned back from her face. The resemblance to Shanice was obvious now. Courtney touched her cheek with trembling fingers. It felt the same. Her own nerves lived inside it. The bottle ran out before Courtney finished. "No," she whispered. "No, no, no..." Her face was already a deep, even brown now. Her neck and upper chest had begun to follow, but the rest of her body lagged behind in pale, uneven patches, like the spell had lost interest halfway down.

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She called Shanice. "Hello?" Courtney froze. Shanice sounded different. "I did what you said- " she snapped, covering her mouth, but the sound had already escaped: low, smooth, husky. On the other end of the line, the real Shanice laughed. "There it is, I was wondering when your voice would catch up." "I used the cream." Courtney restarted, "But it ran out. My face is dark and my body is patchy." Shanice made a soft, amused sound. "Relax." "Relax? Shanice, look at me!" "I don't need to. I know exactly what you look like. Wait, the color will spread. Welcome to Blackness, sister." There was a cruel intimacy in the way she said it. Not just mockery. Something worse. "I hate you," Courtney whispered. Courtney stood in the bathroom for a long time afterward, as the color kept spreading slowly, patiently, covering her shoulders, her stomach, her thighs.



If she waited any longer, there would be nothing left to show. She would just look like Shanice. Courtney went out in the a white top and skirt, so that she could monitor the progress. At the first aid center, the doctor examined the pale patches and commented. "The depigmented patches are consistent with vitiligo." "No," Courtney said, sharply. "Doctor, I'm telling you it's not vitiligo. I was a white woman this morning." The doctor paused. Courtney knew how insane it sounded. "I understand this is distressing," he said gently. "But your underlying complexion is natural." Courtney's mouth fell open. "My underlying complexion?" He nodded. "Yes. The brown skin is normal pigmentation. These lighter patches are the loss of pigment." The last pale pieces of her, the only proof she had left, had just been reclassified as the disease. "No," she whispered. "That's backwards."

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After the visit to the first aid center, Courtney went home. At least the doctor had seen the patches, the fear, the state she was in. If she ever needed a witness, maybe he would help.

By evening, even that comfort began to disappear. She sat on the edge of her bed, watching in horror as a new wave of pigmentation flowed across her skin, darkening her last pale areas, sinking beneath a rich brown tone that matched her face. By nine o'clock, only her hands remained visibly lighter. The hands that had touched Dave, that had typed cruel little messages she now wished she could take back. Then the brown began to spread across them too. It passed over the backs of her hands, into her fingers, around her knuckles, beneath her nails. Courtney stared. Her hands were brown now. All of her was. "So that's it," she whispered.



The following day, she woke up still looking Black. But that was not all. Her whole body seemed to have gained weight overnight. Her thighs and hips had grown from thin to curvy. Her stomach had lost its flatness. She was heavier than she had been, not fat, but curvier, softer. Just like Shanice.

Tears flowed down her dark cheeks. Then the doorbell rang, scaring her. She quickly put on an outfit, dried her tears, and tried to come up with an excuse. Maybe she could say she was a friend of Courtney's, staying there to look after her pet. Her rabbit? No, Courtney had no pets. Anyway, she would think of something.



She opened the door and froze.

It was Shanice.

Only now, Shanice looked one hundred percent like Courtney. The white girl looked radiant and happy, her hair a shade lighter than usual, her smile bright and easy. She was wearing Courtney's old style as if it had always belonged to her.

"Oh wow," Shanice said, looking at the Black, weeping girl in front of her.

"Looking good." Courtney tried to stand straighter, trying to look strong.

Shanice smiled.

"Let me in."