

# Inverted roles

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Harper was a successful American businesswoman, CEO of CRISPR Therapeutics, a biotech company able to implement groundbreaking processes able to access people's DNA to cure genetic diseases. The applications were for the time being still limited to a few conditions but the possibilities were countless. She has been described as an "Elisabeth Holmes who hadn't cheated", referring to the disgraced former self-made billionaire.

One day, she was invited in China for a collaboration proposal. The Shanghai Ruijing Medical Aesthetic Clinic were offering an incredible amount of money in exchange for access to her technology without entering in too much detail beforehand. When she got there, she discovered that they were planning to use her technology to improve plastic surgery by altering the genes accordingly. Some clinical tests had already been carried out, and the results were promising. However, finding the whole deal sketchy, Harper ejected the offer and prepared to go back to the States.

However, on the day of her planned flight, her personal secretary didn't show up nor pick up her calls. "I'm going to fire that lazy bum!" - she mumbled angrily. In that very moment, two Asian men entered her room and covered her mouth with a tissue imbued with chloroform.

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At some point Harper woke up in an unknown bedroom, feeling quite weird, as if she had been sedated and some chemicals were still running through her veins. "What the hell was that?" - she mumbled, her voice unusually high-pitched. She cleared her throat and tried speaking again. Still the same, ultra-feminine, high-pitched voice. Before she could investigate this issue further, she noticed a strand of hair in front of her eyes. It was black. Unknown to her, her now almond-shaped eyes went wide, revealing their dark brown irises. She grabbed her hair with her hand, noticing how her skin had gotten paler and had acquired a yellowish hue.

"What the...?" - she repeated, louder, turning around on the bed. Her whole body looked different. The pale, yellowish hue was everywhere on her skin and her once elongated, slim body was now significantly shorter. Her long, sexy legs were now pretty short. Her head itself felt different in her hands. Her now jet black hair styled in a short bob framed a very different face, from she could tell by touching it. Her nose was wider and flatter, her chin shorter and her eyes, for what she could tell, also had a very different shape from usual.

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She spotted her reflection in a mirror hanging from the wall and her heart nearly skipped a beat. A beautiful Asian woman was staring back at her.

Touching her unfamiliar face, the young woman realised what had happened: they had used her own technology to alter her own DNA to make her unrecognisable. While her company had developed that technology to cure genetic diseases, they wanted to combine it with pre-existing techniques to alter people's appearance, even their ethnicity. Harper didn't need a DNA test to be sure she now had the genes of an East Asian woman, probably Chinese.

Her eyes were very dark, almost black, and had an exquisite almond shape. Her pointy nose, a mark of beauty for her whole life, was now much flatter and broader. Her whole face had a different shape, it was flatter and shorter, and her skin looked smoother, giving her a youthful look. All those changes couldn't be the result of DNA changes alone, lots of ethnic cosmetic surgery had also been performed on her - she thought - but without the DNA alteration, her natural features might resurface somehow. Now, she was destined to look and to age like an ethnic Chinese woman for the rest of her life.

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A laptop with limited internet access was present in the apartment.

Scrolling on the internet, Harper stumbled upon a shocking revelation. She discovered that an impostor, impersonating her with the same technique that had turned her into a Chinese woman, had assumed her identity and, unbeknownst to her, sealed a monumental deal, granting the Chinese company unrestricted access to her company's technological advancements. In fact, the two companies were now basically merged into a single entity, with herself, or to be more precise the woman impersonating her, in charge of everything. People were probably acclaiming her for having accomplished such a successful move, oblivious to the fact that the real Harper found herself trapped in the body of an anonymous Chinese woman somewhere within the mainland, a living testimony of the power of the technique, a mere lab rat in the hands of the Shanghai Ruijing Medical Aesthetic Clinic. Desperate to reach out, Harper futilely attempted several phone calls using her phone, which was still there, but her SIM card had been replaced with a Chinese one, so nobody was picking up her calls.

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When she finally managed to convince one of her managers that she was indeed Harper by texting him reserved information only Harper and him were aware of, she called him.

“What do you mean, this isn’t my voice? - she replied him, trying to lower her voice tone, while only sounding even weirder. - Listen, these people are out of their minds, they have altered my body and DNA with our technology and...”

“I’m sorry, I have to stop you right there, the real Harper is standing in front of my eyes, she’s heading towards my desk. I have no idea how you managed to gain that classified information, but you clearly are not Harper Wilson.”

“What?”

A female voice picked up the call. She sounded exactly like Harper did when she was recorded, the transformed woman noticed, with horror. “Yue Zhang, I know exactly who you are and what you are trying to do. I might have revealed you too many details during our business dinner in Shanghai due to that liquor I drank but you should keep them for yourself.”

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"I'm not Yue Zhang - the young woman cried at the top of her voice, making it sound even more high-pitched - I don't know who you are but I should be there at your place!"

"I'm glad you agree with me - the woman continued, undaunted - We shall remain in touch now that our two companies have merged but please keep some distance, I'm a CEO and you're a secretary, after all!"

Harper googled "Yue Zhang" and the company name. A page on the company website with a photo of a woman looking exactly like her appeared on her screen. This was her identity now. Harper gulped. If this wasn't degrading enough, now she knew she would have to assume the identity of a Chinese secretary working for the company that had taken her business, her life and her own identity. Probably the secretary that had taken her own life, who now was a mere puppet in the hands of the Chinese company.

"I'm... a secretary?" - she meekly asked.

The DNA-related changes were not limited to her looks. They had also affected her personality. While she used to be assertive and dominant, she now felt submissive toward these people who had apparently so much power on her.

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"Yes, never forget that, you're a secretary, my dear Yue! Is everything clear now?"

"But... I can't be Yue Zhang, I'm not even Chinese!" - she replied, confused but dominated by the confidence of the voice of the woman talking to her.

"Hmm, your passport says otherwise, and so does your DNA. As for your language skills, give it some time and you'll get there. Your synapsis are still rearranging themselves but give it a few days and Chinese will replace English as your mother tongue. Good luck with convincing people otherwise!"

"So... I'm stuck like this?"

"Exactly! I've got stuff to do now, I'll call you later!"

The CEO-turned-secretary stared for a few minutes at her phone, still unable to fully accept the situation she was in. Was there really no way out for her? Why hadn't they simply killed her? Did they want to humiliate her or what? Unable to answer all these questions, she turned around and looked at her own reflection in the mirror. The woman who talked to her, whoever she was, was right, nobody would believe who she really was.

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"I guess this is me now..." - Harper, now Yue whispered to herself as she gazed at her reflection in the mirror. As much as the whole thing still sounded incredible to her, her new reality was becoming more and more overwhelming.

Her eyes, facial features, and skin bore a natural appearance, seamlessly aligned with her own DNA. These meticulously crafted cosmetic surgeries rendered any traces of alteration virtually undetectable.

Chinese words danced in her mind, signaling the gradual assimilation of a language that would inevitably be soon overtaking her thoughts. With her new, submissive personality traits, the idea of being a humble secretary seemed safer to her than being a CEO, with all the risks annexed. And after all, she was lucky to have been turned into a beautiful Asian woman, with all the possibilities allowed by the groundbreaking technique. In fact, she believed she looked even better now than in her previous "鬼子" form, a term she used to refer to her former self in a self-deprecating manner. Yue stood up and began preparing herself for her first day of her new life. Her new work attire was already hanging in her closet, waiting for her to accept her new role.



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In the depths of her transformed existence, Harper, now embracing her new identity as Yue, found a surprising sense of fulfillment. As she settled into her role as a Chinese secretary, the weight of her previous life as a CEO gradually faded away. She discovered a serene contentment in the simplicity of her daily tasks, finding joy in supporting and assisting others.

Yue immersed herself in the vibrant Chinese culture that had become an integral part of her being. She embraced the language, the customs, and the rich traditions, each day growing more connected to her new surroundings. The once foreign words that had infiltrated her mind now flowed effortlessly from her lips, further cementing her transformation.

Through her work at the Shanghai Ruijing Medical Aesthetic Clinic, Yue witnessed the transformative power of technology and its ability to enhance the lives of countless individuals. She witnessed the smiles of gratitude and newfound confidence in the faces of those who had undergone these life-changing procedures. Although her journey had been fraught with uncertainty and the loss of her former self, Yue realized that her new path had opened doors to experiences and connections she never could have fathomed. As she looked back at her reflection in the mirror, Yue saw not just a changed appearance but a new soul, filled with love and compassion. With newfound grace and inner peace, Yue embraced her journey as an ongoing exploration of self-discovery and personal growth. She was no longer Harper, the CEO of CRISPR Therapeutics, but Yue, the Chinese secretary whose spirit shone brightly within the walls of the clinic and whose smile made many patients fall for her.