

Going native

MARCH 2021



Charlotte was the daughter of a Protestant missionary sent by his Church in the Amazon forest to make some converts among the indigenous tribes. She was a fervent Christian herself and took that mission very seriously.

Whenever her father left their village to visit a new tribe in the deep Amazon forest, she was escorting

him. Being so young and bright, she also learned the language spoken by the indigenous people quite well and was eager to mingle more with them, believing she could do even more to achieve their mission.

Despite her family always warning her of the perils she might encounter by meeting indigenous people all alone, she sometimes ventured out

on her own when her father was busy or traveling to the big city. One of those times, she took a path never explored before and ended up in a village almost untouched by Westerners.

As soon as she started chatting with the locals, they showed their surprise and called the local shaman. The man was a well built native in his forties and wasted no time: "How dare you enter our sacred land and try to impose your silly religion over our ancestral beliefs? We had to hide all the way here to be untouched by you damned pale skins and yet you dare to convert us? We need to teach you a lesson!". Charlotte understood it all and felt extremely scared by the situation. At the same time, the shaman has a peculiar charisma that made it impossible to disobey him or escape.

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"I see you know our language, I'm impressed! You actually sound like a Native, why not making you more accustomed with our culture?" saying this, the man prepared a potion with his hands and gave it to Charlotte, in a terracotta pot.

Charlotte was very unsure what to do, it could be something poisonous and yet she was victim of the charisma of the shaman so she had to do as ordered to her. The potion did indeed taste awful so as soon as she emptied the pot she regretted it and began coughing. She saw the shaman smiling as she began to feel weird. More precisely, her head felt a bit off, her eyes were burning and her scalp tingling. "What have you done to me?" - she asked. "Don't worry girl, it won't last much longer" reassured the shaman "You'll be free to walk away as soon as you feel better". The feeling was indeed fading and Charlotte was calming down and setting her mind to the long walk back home when she



noticed something with the corner of her eye. Her hair looked definitely darker than usual. She grabbed it with her hand and screamed loud noticing it was indeed a full brown colour, nothing like the blonde shade she had always had. "We don't have yellow hair here, I thought this might help you feel more at home among us!" - explained her the shaman.

At that point, Charlotte freaked out and began to run towards her village. Her father was still away but she opened the gates nevertheless with her personal keys. As soon as she made her way to her bathroom, she checked herself in the mirror and almost fainted. Gone were her innocent blue eyes, replaced with very dark brown irises. Her hair was indeed dark brown now and her whole face had acquired something exotic.

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She wept all night trying to figure out how to get away from that nightmare. Whatever they did to her, she wasn't recognisable anymore, her father was expected to come back any moment the day after and she couldn't certainly show up looking like a different person. She had to talk to the shaman again, to beg his pardon and to implore him to turn her back.

As soon as the sun rose the morning after, she left the camp unnoticed and headed to the natives' village. The shaman was there, waiting for her in front of his hut and welcomed her with these words: "I'm so glad to see you again so soon, too bad we couldn't finish our conversation yesterday!". Charlotte bowed down and presented him some jewels collected by her mission to finance their activities "Revered shaman, please accept these gifts and accept my sincerest apologies in behalf of the whole mission. We will never interfere anymore with your community and I will personally devote myself to the preservation of your culture. Please, just revert these changes in exchange for that, my family won't accept me anymore looking this different!".

"I'm very impressed with these gifts". - the man said, sincerely shocked to see such riches - "we don't have such beautiful jewellery here, but why not interfering anymore with us, you were becoming so well integrated with us" - he smiled and paused. "However, if you want

to change your appearance I can help you with that. Before that, please accept and wear this traditional dress, necklace and earrings as sign of our friendship. You can disrobe in that corner" Charlotte did as requested - she didn't want to offend the shaman now but as soon as she had the garments on, the necklace began to tighten around her neck, and she felt the same tingling feeling on her face again. The shaman laughed as Charlotte felt her facial bones rearrange and her eyes change shape. When the feeling was over, she rushed to the nearest pond, just outside the shaman's hut and saw what he had done to her: she now looked fully indigenous with exotic, almost Asian-looking eyes, there was no way of coming back to civilisation looking like this.

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“You palefaces always believed to be better than us, right? You destroyed the land and culture of our brothers, I’ve seen them, they now live in shabby towns in the outskirts of your beautiful cities and waste their days in demonic drinks, oblivious to their ancestors’ traditions and values. How dare you challenge our culture?” “We have lost many women recently, you will be a valid replacement now that I’ve made you beautiful according to our standards. Many young men of the tribe will be eager to take you in their bed but we need to do something more to finish your look” - saying that, he grabbed a brush and some red pigment and began to draw patterns on Charlotte’s face. The face paintings made her look even more intensely native and even more distant from her original self. “We need a new name for you, how about Tica, as you are beautiful as a flower?” Charlotte accepted her new name, weeping and bowing in submission.

After several sleepless nights and days of crying, Charlotte had to face reality. She had lost any hope of ever returning back to normal. Nobody would ever believe what had they done to her and she would be mistaken for an indigenous girl with mental issues. God only knows how she would end up, probably as a cheap prostitute in Rio de Janeiro. She felt safer there where she was now. Maybe it was the shaman’s magic but she was starting to feel like she belonged there. It would be a great pain for her father but his faith and his family would support him. As for her faith, she promised herself to keep praying in secret, she even kept a Bible with herself.

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Things went different though. The shaman's magic continued to have an effect on her mind, making her feel more and more at ease with her new identity. She comfortably wore traditional native garments and didn't mind showing her naked bottom to strangers in her village. They weren't even strangers anymore, as she quickly became popular among everybody as the new proselytite of the powerful shaman, such an irony for who tried to convert the natives to the Christian creed.

Her father did what he could to find and rescue her but it was all in vain. When, many months later, he had lost any hopes of ever finding his missing daughter Charlotte, now Tica was irremediably lost anyways Even if he actually met her he would have had no suspicion that the buxom indigenous girl who proudly showed face paintings and tribal garments was actually his beloved Charlotte.

Tica has also gained some weight, as customary in her new culture, and became accustomed with her new life. She has a partner now, more than one to be more accurate, and a child was on his way. She was a fervent believer of her new ancestral deities and the Bible lay forgotten In her hut. The last time she browsed it she noticed her eyes quickly got tired of all those black signs, it took her so much effort to decipher them! A few more months and the shaman's magic would have full effect: she would not be able to understand English anymore, written or spoken. But it wouldn't matter, by then she would be busy with the duties of a traditional wife and mother in the indigenous culture and anything else would be long forgotten.