

FOR REFERENCE: Real Submission Stories

PRETTY HURT REFERENCE STORY BELOW

Title: Finally Worthy?

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Age: 33

Category: Pretty Hurt

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My name is Janelle, and I'm from Prince George's County, Maryland. This is a place they call *Pretty Girl County*. Which is wild, because for a long time I never felt like one of the pretty girls... I'll keep it a buck. Being bigger made me invisible. Losing weight made me *seen* but not in the cute, "I feel loved and accepted" kind of way. More like, "Oh wow, society really be that shallow" kind of way.

Back when I was pushing 250 lbs, I was *that girl* who got skipped over in every way. Salespeople ignored me, guys treated me like I was their little sister or "homegirl," and the only DMs I got were either creepy fetish dudes or fake compliments followed by "you got such a pretty face." Mmmkay.

It didn't matter how smart I was, how funny I was, or how good of a friend I could be. All the world saw was "fat," and in their eyes, that meant I didn't deserve basic respect. Let alone attention, opportunities, or romance. That's the real-world fatphobia no one wants to say out loud.

But then came my *glow-up*.

Not for revenge. Not for a man. Just for me. I started walking, working out, learning how to eat better without starving myself, and yeah, getting cute for the gym (because you never know who's watching). Slowly, the weight came off. I lost about 100 lbs over 18 months. And that's when life got... weird.

Once I slimmed down, it was like I unlocked a whole new level of visibility. Suddenly everyone had manners. Doors got held open. Baristas smiled and remembered my name. Guys who used to friend-zone me started asking if I wanted to "grab drinks sometime." Like sir, *be fr*, you left me on read last year.

Even at work, I noticed the change. Coworkers who barely acknowledged my existence were now saying things like "you've been glowing lately" and managers called me "more confident" even though I was literally doing the same exact job. It's giving... favoritism in the smaller body.

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Don't get me wrong, some of it felt good. Compliments hit different when you spent years being ignored. But there was always this voice in the back of my head like: *Oh, so I had to get skinny to matter?*

The praise came fast, but so did the creepy behavior.

The first time I got catcalled? I was on my way to Target in sweatpants. Car slowed down, dude leaned out the window like, "Hey beautiful, where you going looking like that?" I felt my stomach drop. Not flattered. Just... unsafe.

Then there was the guy at the club who touched my waist to move past me. Never happened before. And I hated it. Suddenly, I wasn't just *seen*, I was a *target*. It made me miss being invisible. Pretty privilege gave me access, but also took away peace.

Dating? A mess. Worst part? A guy who ignored me when I was heavier suddenly popped up in my DMs with: "You been looking good lately." Sir... not you trying to spin the block like we got unfinished business. Go play with someone else.

One of the biggest wake-up calls? People from my past popping up. There was this girl who used to ghost me whenever I invited her out. Now she wanted to hang? Talkin' about "We should get brunch! You've changed so much." Yeah girl, *you* changed. I got smaller. Your vibe got faker.

Even some of my closest friends got weird. Jealous energy. Passive-aggressive compliments. One even asked if I was "trying too hard" because I posted a bikini pic. I was like, no sis, I'm just not hiding anymore. Why does *my* confidence threaten *your* comfort? Here's the kicker: when I was heavier, girls loved me. I wasn't a threat. I was the "funny fat friend." But when I lost the weight, they either switched up or got real quiet. That hurt more than any dumb guy ever could.

Pretty privilege felt good... until I realized it wasn't real. It's rented. And the rent is *your appearance*. I started obsessing over food, numbers, and mirror angles. The fear of gaining weight back made me panicky. Like, what if I go back to being ignored? What if all this attention dries up? I was scared to go out without makeup. Scared to wear sweats again. Scared that "old me" would crawl back and I'd lose the new life I had "earned."

But then it hit me: I didn't earn anything *new*. I just stepped into a body the world decided was more "worthy."

And that broke me.

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Let's be real. Pretty privilege is real, but it's *fragile*. One wrong angle, one weight fluctuation, one bad hair day and it's like you fall out of grace. People treat beauty like currency, and if you don't have the right "look," your worth gets discounted.

Society doesn't actually love pretty women. It loves the *idea* of them. As long as we're available, submissive, "not too loud," and hot enough to sell stuff or decorate the scene. But step out of that box and suddenly, you're too much. Too opinionated. Too confident. Too *real*.

The compliments I got post-weight-loss were laced with shade. "You look amazing now!" Now? So before, what was I? A placeholder?

They loved the shell. But they didn't know me. And that's what hurt the most.

So yeah, I lost weight. I got skinnier. The world got nicer. But I also got smarter. Wiser. Louder.

Because now I see it clearly: none of it was ever about me. It was about fitting into their mold. About making people comfortable.

And I'm done living for other people's comfort.

Now, tell me why I gained some weight back but as I am working to get the weight back down, I am doing it for me, and me only. For my health and my desire. That is all.

The truth is, I was always enough. Big, small, in-between. My heart? Always golden. My loyalty? Always A1. My ambition? Always there. I didn't magically become more deserving just because I wear a medium now.

I deserved to be seen, loved, and celebrated *then*. The world just refused to give it to me. But I give it to myself now. So no, this isn't a glow-up fairytale. There's no prince. No finish line. No magical moment where I finally "make it." This is real life. And it's messy.

But it's *mine*.

PRETTY PRIVILEGE STORY BELOW

FOR REFERENCE: Real Submission Stories

Story Title: Chocolate Silk & Princess Things

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Age: 27

Category: Pretty Privileged – The Light Side

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“Soft life loading... oh wait, it’s already here.”

I’ve always known I was beautiful.

Not in an over the top kind of way, but in the kind of way that feels like silk against the soul. It’s quiet, intentional, and unforgettable. Soft. Magnetic. The kind of beauty that doesn’t audition. It just exists. It just is.

I didn’t have to perform for it. I didn’t have to overcompensate. I’ve never been the “please pick me” girl. I feel like my beauty simply introduces itself before I open my mouth.

Sometimes it’s the way a room gets real quiet when I walk in. Other times, it’s the way strangers fumble compliments like they weren’t prepared to be stunned before noon. I’ve had people literally say “Wait... you’re just walking around like this?” Store clerks forget to ring up water. It’s always soft. Always giving “princess treatment only” energy.

I’m 27. Nigerian-American. Born in D.C., raised in Prince George’s County. My skin? Chocolate. Rich, reflective, divine. My hair? Long, thick, natural, *real inches*. Waist-length when pressed, a crown of coils when free. Texture that defies gravity and demands respect. Often weaved up but it never gave “stop the show”.

I grew up in an era where being dark-skinned wasn’t just respected, it was romanticized. My timelines were full of Kelly Rowland edits and Lauryn Hill quotes. Nia Long was *the blueprint*, and Lupita made magazine covers look like museum pieces. I wasn’t the token. I was the template.

So when people said, “*Dark-skinned girls have to work harder to be seen,*” I couldn’t relate. That was never my testimony.

From day one, I’ve been *That Girl*.

I remember in high school, walking the halls in a varsity jacket that wasn’t mine, locs freshly retwisted, and lip gloss loud. A boy, one of those tall, too-cool types just stared and whispered, “*You look like you already know how good life’s about to be to you.*” I smiled. Because I *did*.

Let’s talk pretty privilege.

I’ve had a charmed life, in ways that are quiet but undeniable.

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My friends joke that things just... work out for me. When we're out, the waiter always seems just a little more attentive, making eye contact, refilling my glass before I notice it's low, slipping in a free dessert with a "don't worry about it" smile.

It just happens.

Little things add up.

The man in line at Starbucks insists I go ahead of him. When I'm with a group, people address me first without realizing they've done it. At work, I've had senior execs remember my name after one meeting, when I've seen them forget others' time and time again.

I don't do much. I just show up. And somehow, the world makes room.

Dating has its own rhythm. I've never begged for romance or waited long for clarity. Men tend to be decisive with me either all in, or very clear they aren't ready for someone like me. I prefer it that way. I've had thoughtful gestures: someone driving across town just to bring me my favorite croissant before a stressful week, another who mailed me books with sticky notes in the margins because he said they "reminded him of the way I think."

None of it felt performative. It felt... natural.

I remember once being picked up for dinner. I wasn't told where we were going, but I didn't feel the need to ask. The restaurant ended up being this quiet rooftop downtown, with soft jazz playing and a sunset view. He said, "It just felt like your vibe." I believed him. Now jazz wasn't my thing but it was a vibe.

And maybe that's what it is. I don't move through life expecting special treatment, but I notice when it happens. I know when someone's going out of their way to be kind. And over time, I've realized: people do that for me. Often.

Not because I demand it. But because something about me invites it.

And I don't shrink to make it more comfortable for others. I simply say thank you and keep moving with grace. And let's be clear: I've been through heartbreak. But never humiliation. Never begging. Never wondering, "Was it me?" I've always known I was enough. When someone fumbled me, I let them go and the universe sent better. Every time.

Some call it pretty privilege. I call it divine alignment.

It's favor. It's softness wrapped in strength. It's the reward of knowing who you are and never stepping off your throne to prove it.

And still, I stay grounded. I give what I get. I compliment other women loudly. I over-tip. I hold doors. I tell the girl in the Starbucks line her brows are everything. Because kindness isn't performative. It's part of the package.

I don't apologize for being beautiful. Or treated beautifully. I don't shrink to make others comfortable. I radiate because I'm supposed to. Because little chocolate girls need to see that this level of love exists for *them*, too.

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So yes, my life has been soft. Sweet. Sometimes surreal.

I believe in fairytales because I'm living mine. Not because a man saved me. But because I was taught to value myself long before anyone else did.

I'm not the exception, I'm the evidence.

When a chocolate-skinned Black girl is poured into, protected, and reminded she's magic, she doesn't just glow.

She glides.

And the world? It rises to meet her. As it should.