

IYAPO YAPA



MELANIN

A NOVEL

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DoEAiA Media Publishing



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*For my beautiful Angela (Gela) My love,
inspiration and muse.*

PREFACE

The seeds for MELANIN were actually planted way back in 1995 with the release of the motion picture “White Man’s Burden” starring John Travolta and Harry Belafonte.

Though I did not go to the theater to see it (just as many during its release based upon box office numbers), I was still anxious to watch the movie and see what a version of that world (a world where the roles were reversed, and Black people were on top, and white people were marginalized and at the bottom) would look like.

I finally got to see the movie on HBO, I believe, a few years after the release. To call it disappointing would be a colossal understatement. The movie did not make any kind of deep social commentary, nor did it make a profound statement about the human condition. It literally just reversed the roles of Black and white people and that was it. Even during that era, before I was what is now referred to as, “conscious”, I saw the movie as being extremely problematic and superficial. I have since read several stories based upon that premise (Black on top, white on bottom), and they all left me with the same emptiness I felt when I watched White Man’s Burden.

In the Batman comic book, there was a story line for a series called “The Killing Joke”, in which the Joker does his level best to make Batman, Commissioner Gordon and others crack. His premise is that the only thing that separates him from everyone else is “One bad day.” Of course, the heroes don’t crack, and the Joker’s premise is disproven.

The problem with White Man’s Burden and stories and movies like it is that they are based upon the flawed premise or supposition, of the Joker, namely that everyone would behave exactly the same way as he, given the same circumstances. The message that, no matter WHO is on top, those in the position of power will be abusive to those over whom they have the power. That narrative, in my opinion only serves those who are at the top of the system and in control of it—arguing that “the only difference between us and them is one GOOD day.”

But is that the case?

MELANIN unpacks the questions that the stories I've read and the movies I've watched were void of (either intentionally, or by virtue of a world view that has us conditioned to believe that 'people are people'). If Black people were "on top" what would the world really look like? As many thought leaders and revolutionaries have pointed out time after time, it is not Black people who are responsible for the proliferation of nuclear arsenals. It is not Black people who developed and deploy chemical and biological weapons. It is not Black people who seek to tame and control everything in which we come in contact. So, would we operate the same way in business, government, and society at large if we were at the top echelons of it?

I think not.

So, of course this book is going to come from my slant, my thought process, and my foundational premise, which is that there are in fact, differences between Black and white people and depending on who is in charge of it the world would run and work completely differently. I am attempting with this book to explore the hypocrisy, inconsistencies and outright lies perpetuated on our people by those who seek to degrade and marginalize us.

In all media and forms of communication, from cradle to grave, our people and others are given the narrative that our people are criminals by nature, that we are drug addicted, oversexed, lazy, anti-intellectual, violent brutes and wenches who are here only to serve at the pleasure of our oppressor—IF we are domesticated, much in the way they seem to domesticate animals, even tigers, to serve as their pets.

The narrative is false, and the original premise (as outlined above), is flawed. My answer to it is the book you now hold.

It is my sincerest hope that you find MELANIN: A Novel not only entertaining, but also thought provoking and enlightening.

Thank you for reading Melanin!

Iyapo

MELANIN: A NOVEL

Iyapo Yapa

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“There ain’t a white man in this room that would change places with me... none-ah-ya... none-ah-ya would change place with me... and I’m **rich**! That’s how good it is to be white. There’s a white one leg busboy in here right now that won’t change places with **my** black ass! He goes, ‘Nah I don’t wanna switch, I wanna ride this white thang out... see where it takes me’.” [sic]

Chris Rock (Bigger and Blacker)

“I draw the line in the dust and toss the gauntlet before the feet of tyranny, and I say segregation now, segregation tomorrow, segregation forever.”

George C. Wallace (From his inaugural address - Jan. 14, 1963)

“Oh Lord, I’ve never been a religious man; I won’t try to kid you about that. I don’t go to church, and I only pray when I’m feeling scared or rotten. I meant to pray last night; perhaps you’re angry because I didn’t. Anyway Lord, I’m in trouble now, which is why I’m trying to make contact. Please Lord, make it all be a terrific nightmare, and you will see a nice person come out of this shower.”

Jeff Gerber (The Watermelon Man)

"Do you suppose they'll treat me as John Howard Griffin, regardless of my color—or will they treat me as some nameless Negro, even though I am still the same man?"

John Howard Griffin (Black Like Me)

“When green is all there is to be - It could make you wonder why, but why wonder, why wonder – I am green, and it'll do fine - it's beautiful. And I think it's what I want to be.”

Kermit the Frog

MELANIN

Excerpt

CHAPTER 2



rymon Klass did not consider himself racist, at least no more or less than anyone within his circle, he supposed.

B Still, as he sat quietly, he could not stop staring and thinking rather unpleasant thoughts about the sixty-something-year-old black man who was staring back at him. The man was very dark and had brown eyes (as black men typically do), but something about them wasn't quite brown. There was also a hint of a greenish hue to them, or maybe not. Perhaps it was in Brymon's imagination. His features were relatively sharp for a black man, and his face was the face of a man who once carried himself with dignity, but for whatever reasons, that feeling had given way to despair.

Words like coon, Sambo, and nigger crowded Brymon's thoughts and refused to withdraw. Perhaps, reasoned Klass, if he broke eye contact with this Black person, he would find some other object upon which to become fixated.

Klass quickly looked down at his feet. The footies he wore were a far cry from the Stacy Adams he was used to adorning his feet with. In an earlier time, Klass could have walked up to this person who was so determined to focus on him and paid five bucks to have him shine his pricey wingtips and maybe sing a song to go with it... but not today.

Klass wiggled his feet, more out of nervous tension than anything else, and as he did, he felt his right footie wasn't quite as snug as the left. He leisurely bent down, grabbed the offending sock by the top, and pulled it taut. Completing the task, Klass sat up slowly, head still

facing forward, and moved only his eyes to look in the direction of the unfamiliar Black man.

The stranger was still looking at Klass.

Brymon sluggishly turned his head, so the two were once again locked eye to eye, full face. “What the hell are you looking at?” the black man said finally.

Klass did not answer.

“Never seen dark skin before?”

Klass remained silent.

“Okay, Boss. You want to stare at me ... have at it. Just stare as long as you want, or maybe pull out your phone and take a picture ... it’ll last longer.”

Klass sighed haplessly and turned his gaze again to the floor.

When he heard the light knock on the door, Klass turned with a start in spite of himself. Following the knock floated a soft, muffled, “May I come in?”

Looking back unenthusiastically toward the footies so he could ignore the Black man adjacent to him, Klass managed a terse, barely audible, “Free country.”

The door opened slowly without making any discernible noise, and Doctor Gina McFaine walked in. The doctor gently closed the door behind her and approached Klass in the way one would sneak up on an animal they were trying not to frighten. McFaine, a Genetic Metabolic Dermatologist, or GMD, as they had come to be known, was ranked as one of the top practitioners in her field. Many doctors had migrated into genetic metabolic dermatology because it was a highly specialized field, in high demand, and, of course, highly lucrative.

For patients receiving GMD procedures, results could vary widely

from person to person. Because the process was irreversible, those who opted to have it done wanted only the very best doctors they could afford to perform it, Gina McFaine was one of the best, and Brymon Klass could well afford her.

Along with being highly ranked internationally for her work as a GMD, McFaine was what Klass would have termed in decades past as “easy on the eye.” Gina McFaine was a stunning woman. The way she carried her five-foot eleven-inch frame was that of a woman who obviously cared greatly about how she looked. Everything about the young doctor exuded vitality and confidence, from her radiant smile to her personable and professional demeanor.

She wore loose-fitting yellow scrubs and a white lab coat that did no justice to the athletic physique hidden beneath it, and her extremely dark skin drew a stark contrast against the yellow pants and top partially concealed beneath the lab coat. The first time Klass met Dr. McFaine, he was taken aback by how much she resembled a young Kim Novak, her dark, nearly true ebony skin tone and flowing braided hair notwithstanding. Brymon would have bet any amount of money McFaine was a dead ringer for Novak—before.

Dr. McFaine stood directly in front of Brymon to look him over, and she could see the man before her was distraught. She stood before Klass for thirty seconds and carefully chose her words before speaking. She glanced to the mirror that hung adjacent to where Brymon sat, and then looked back at her patient.

“Have you looked at yourself in the mirror yet?” She said.

Still looking down and without speaking, Klass nodded his head as if having been confronted about some humiliating transgression and grudgingly, ashamedly, confirming it was true.

“I know it’s surreal, but you’ll adjust to it. I promise.”

Klass did not look up.

Dr. McFaine decided it would be best to move into the routine and break from the conversation altogether.

“Would you stand up for me please and remove your gown?” she said.

Suddenly feeling much older than he was, Klass stood up slowly from his place on the side of the hospital bed and unhurriedly loosened his hospital gown from the side. He slid it off, then wadded it up and placed it on the bed, and did a half turn to face the doctor once more, this time, with the exception of his footies, naked as the day he was born.

Silently McFaine looked first at the left side of her patient’s face and then the right. She then took two steps back and carefully surveyed the rest of Mr. Klass.

“Turn around, please.” She said.

Klass turned his back to the doctor, waddling as he did, and without being asked, raised his arms shoulder high and extended them outward so that he was in an “airplane” stance.

“Any nausea, dizziness, discomfort, or unusual pain anywhere?”

“No.”

“Blurred vision?”

“No ma’am.”

“Changes in urination or bowel movements?”

“None.”

“Good.”

Since beginning the treatments, Klass no longer felt even a pang of embarrassment when standing before the doctor in the altogether. He definitely wasn’t shy about her looking at his butt. After all, she had already seen his baby maker umpteen times, so his bum was no big deal, and the questions about his health had become routine.

However, the queries and one-word answers seemed to loosen Brymon up enough to look awkwardly over his left shoulder and ask a question of his own.

“When can I leave?” he said.

“Well, this is your fourth visit, so you know the drill. You are in good health according to your blood work and the rest of the skin tests, so, just like with the first three procedures, you will need to stay another three days for the mandatory mental health counseling sessions.”

“Wonderful.”

“Don’t feel so bad. This is your last visit, this is the darkest tone attainable, so you won’t have to come back for any more procedures and be bothered by me anymore.”

“Hell, seeing you was the only thing I looked forward to in this prison.”

“Come on, it isn’t as bad as all that.” She said, “You will need to follow up in three months with the GMD fellow, and once per month for the next six months with a Changeover Therapist of your choice. You can continue to see the one here, or you can keep using your own if you like, but as you know, it is mandatory for everyone after they’ve had this procedure.”

“I understand.”

“Any questions or concerns?”

“No questions. A lot of concerns ... but I’ll take them up with the shrink.”

“Alright then, Mr. Klass. You have a good rest of the day and keep your spirits up.”

Dr. McFaine turned slowly, taking several steps toward the door, then, as if she had forgotten something, turned around and walked

back over to her patient, who had by now picked up his rumpled hospital gown and was tying it back on at the side. She stopped and stood again before him as he plopped defeated, once more to his seated position on the side of the bed.

She looked at him, this time not as a doctor, but with genuine human-to-human concern. Steadily, she knelt down until she was at eye level with the man. Dr. McFaine cradled her tablet in her left arm and extended her right hand to gently, empathetically, pat Klass on his left knee. The doctor looked deep into the once green, now brown eyes of Brymon Klass, her own deep brown, once blue eyes unflinching.

“Look, Brymon ...” she said, “I’m not supposed to be telling you this but- to be honest, it was very difficult for me in the beginning too. After I had my final treatment, I refused to leave my home for almost three months. I took it very hard and fell into a pretty deep depression, but I had a good change over therapist, thank Yah. He helped me get through the rough parts, and now, less than a year later, here I am. What I’m trying to tell you is ... it **will** get better. I swear ... it does get better. Who knows, in time, you may find you like it even more than your original tone.”

“And do you like your new tone more now?”

“I’m used to it, and it ain’t bad ... and I’ll tell you something else. After the depression lifted and I spoke with the changeover therapist, something happened to me. Something changed in me.”

“Changed?”

“Yes, I – I can’t explain It” McFaine said as she slowly shook her head as if searching her mind for a distant memory that was too far gone to be recaptured. “When I started practicing medicine, I truly thought of myself as a compassionate, empathetic doctor, but I wasn’t.”

Brymon squinted his eyes and looked at the doctor in a way that let her know he could not grasp what it was she was suggesting, a thing more complicated by the fact Gina wasn’t quite certain exactly what

she meant herself.

“I **thought** I had compassion ...” she continued, “but actually, I was only mimicking what I thought compassion was ... but now ... now ... I **feel**.”

“I’m sorry, Doctor, I just don’t underst—”

“I **FEEL**, Brymon. I have a deeper understanding of what it means to be connected. I feel connected to the universe and to people in a way I didn’t experience before ... and I’ve developed a sense of spirituality that I didn’t even know I lacked. I feel more at peace, more at one ... and far more congruent ... and to a degree, ashamed that I didn’t feel and see these things before.”

“I’m sorry, Gina, I just don’t—”

McFaine leaned in a little closer. “Food tastes different ... better ... and ...” she added almost in a whisper as if telling a secret, “... as time goes by, you’ll start seeing more colors if you don’t already because of the first procedures. This last one tends to speed everything up.” Dr. McFaine briskly tapped Brymon’s knee again. “Brymon, do you like listening to music?”

“Doesn’t everybody?”

“When was the last time you listened to something really upbeat?”

“I dunno ... it’s been a while. Why?”

“Next time you start listening to music, especially upbeat. Try something.”

“What’s that?”

“At some point, start clapping to the music.”

“Clapping? Why?”

“Brymon, without even thinking about it, I can almost guarantee you that when you start clapping, you’ll automatically come in at two and four.”

“Two and four? What does that even mean?” Brymon said looking more confused than ever.

McFaine almost laughed, “You’ll see.”

Brymon continued hanging his head and looking despondent despite Dr. McFaine’s obvious efforts to cheer him up. “I apologize. I’m just feeling sorry for myself; it’ll pass.” Klass said.

He was certain his doctor must have been breaking some kind of code or rule in confiding those things to him with such candor. How pitiful a creature he must have looked to move her to do such a thing.

McFaine stood up, snapped back into character as a doctor, and again walked toward the door. She stopped at the wall dispenser common to each room, to squeeze a couple squirts of sanitizer into her palm and massage it into her hands. Klass watched her, secretly wishing she would come back and further assuage him of his fears.

“Doctor McFaine ... Gina?” Klass said.

“Yes, Mr. Klass?”

“Thank you.”

“You’re welcome.”

“Hey, Doc?”

“Yes?”

“Did anyone ever tell you, you look like Kim Novak?”

“They used to.”

“You still do,” Klass said and gave the doctor a faint smile and a nod.

McFaine said nothing but returned a warm smile and disappeared on the other side of the door that closed behind her as silently as it had opened.

Klass turned his gaze back to the mirror that had been his only company before the doctor entered. “Well, you old negro. What now?” the black man on the other side of the glass said.

Klass sighed, struggled to his feet, walked over to the window, and looked out over the picturesque panorama before him.

As he looked at the sunlight and how deceptively beautiful it was, the only way to know it was sweltering outside within his air-conditioned hospital room was to check the temperature using his phone or tablet. Even then, he knew the heat was no longer an issue. With his new melanin, it was barely noticeable to him now.

He thought about how the world had irrevocably changed, and the fact he played a major role in that change.

Klass shook his head slowly as he remembered something his father told him at least a hundred times:

“The worst part of fucking yourself is that you never realize you’re doing it until after you’ve done it.”

He stood silent in his hospital gown and footies, a new Negro wearing what felt like an emasculating, absurdly colored dress underneath which he was completely naked. And to complete the humiliation, Klass wore socks he wouldn’t have let one of his grandchildren—if he had any—play in, and he pondered how he had come to such a pass. Of course, he was one of the most powerful industrialists on the planet. Still, presently he was nothing more than any number of the countless Caucasians in the world who had finally crossed over, taking the darkest route for the sake of prestige-making him into just another “newbie.”

Brymon had always been a deep thinker, and the time he was now spending in what he considered his “cell” had kicked his thought processes into overdrive. He had already undergone three darkening treatments before this final treatment, taking him to a level one tone. Before the final transformation, Klass had thought there would be no real shock at seeing the darker tone in the mirror. After all, he had adjusted to changing his race and being made several shades darker already.

Klass was told before the last procedure that changeovers from one pigment to another was fairly uniform, but going from two to one, was far more intense and extreme. Before the final treatment, Brymon assumed he would have little trouble adjusting to the fourth and final skin tone, seeing that he had already gotten comfortable with waking up each time to his ever darkening pigment. However, he was wrong. He did not like being so close to pure black, but because of the circles in which he traveled and the people with whom he had to wheel, deal and make contact, the darker skin tone was almost a necessity, a way to broadcast status.

Klass stared blankly out the hospital window, now looking at everything before him but not really seeing any of it. His mind drifted back to a couple of decades earlier when, as the founder and CEO of Klass International, his only concerns were his board of directors and his profit margins.

Brymon Klass was what many considered the last of the “self-made” billionaires. Many times, on various TV talk shows, lectures, and book signings, he would lament his struggle to build a company starting with a paltry small loan of a few million dollars and some inheritance money from his father, which he turned into the multi-billion dollar Klass International that it became.

There were many heated discussions about climate change and ozone depletion between him, his wife, and his teenage daughter Rita. He recollected how he would always vehemently deny the reality of both phenomena; how there were several teams of scientists from all over the world who were hired by Klass International to independently and impartially report twice per year on their findings pertaining to any changes to the ozone, or for

significant signs of global warming. With each report, the findings were either negative or negligible.

The findings were also a lie.

Klass knew he had a group of very well bought and paid for researchers who made perfect “double agents” for the rest of the population, government, and scientific community. So Klass was actually playing devil’s advocate in a debate he knew for a fact he was on the wrong side of.

Klass’s train of thought broke when he heard another knock on the door of his hospital room, his hope of Dr. McFaine having returned was quickly dashed by that of a friendly male voice saying, “Nutrition!” Klass told the server it was all right to come in.

Once inside the room, the server, a tall, moderately dark Black man, walked in carrying a tray with a covered dish, a glass of water, a glass of juice, assorted condiments, and silverware. “Where would you like me to sit your lunch?” he said.

“Anywhere. Wait a minute. You aren’t a natural?”

“Oh no. I crossed over ‘bout, lemesees ... little more’n eight years ago, I guess. Yeah, little more’n eight years – my last treatment was ‘bout two years ago, though.”

“And you’re working here in food services? I mean ... I know it’s none of my business, and I’m not trying to be insulting, but you are pretty ... well pretty ...”

“Dark?”

“Again, I’m not trying to be insulting, but how could you afford that tone? It’s pretty damned expensive. Look at me, I know.”

The young man snickered and walked up near Mr. Klass. He then leaned in close and spoke to him the way a person does when they have done something extremely naughty but gotten away with it Scott free and couldn’t wait to tell someone about it.

“I’ve been working here kind of a long time. Quiet as it’s kept, this hospital has a pretty high turnover rate, so when you work here, if you stick around, you get hellacious discounts on the skin darkening as an incentive to stay, but they only allow one shade every three years. It took me nine years to get to this level ... So I plan to do one more next year, then I’m outta here.”

Klass listened, albeit uncomfortably, as he was not used to a “regular person” being able to so readily step into his personal space.

“How long did it take for you to get used to it?”

“Not long, pretty quickly I learned to love it!”

“Is that right?”

“Darn straight. Before I crossed over, I was the average college student, working here so that I could earn some extra money above what my parents were giving me. But after I got my skin up to a level two, all I have to do is wear a nice suit and drive a really nice car, and people think I have money”.

“It can’t be that simple.”

“Sure it is. Now, without a skill set or a degree, just looking the way I do could only get me so far, but the important thing is that once I graduate, it at least gets the doors opened for me and gives me access to the kinds of people I need to deal with so I can move up in the world. It’s not what you know; it’s who you know and how much access you have. Come on, I’m not telling **you** anything, Mr. Klass.”

“No, son, you’re absolutely right.”

“See, you’re already up there, so the new level one tone you have is more like having bought a new Lamborghini or something.”

The young man turned toward the door so that he could continue his round of deliveries. He shook his head, and though not turning around, Klass could tell he was almost giddy.

“I’m tellin’ you, Mr. Klass, this whole radiation thing is about the best thing that ever happened to me. Who would have ever thought that being a Black guy would turn into the biggest advantage you can have in society?”

“I sure as shit never imagined it,” Klass whispered.

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NOW ON EARTH THERE WERE BASICALLY ONLY TWO OPTIONS AVAILABLE TO THE WHITE POPULATION:

1. BECOME PHENOTYPICALLY, GENETICALLY BLACK.

OR

2. DIE.

THERE WERE A NUMBER OF CIRCUMSTANCES THAT ALIGNED TO PRODUCE THE PERFECT STORM THAT CREATED THE UNTHINKABLE PREDICAMENT WITH WHICH THE WHITE POPULATION NOW STRUGGLED; BUT ONE CORPORATION MORE THAN ANY OTHER WAS AT THE HEART OF IT ONE CORPORATION THAT SERVED AS THE FINAL BREATH OF A SYSTEM SICK AND FOR DECADES ON LIFE SUPPORT.



Iyapo Yapa is a cartoonist, illustrator, and graphic artist who has always worked in the graphic art field, but has finally made the leap to his TRUE passion, WRITING. When not writing, Iyapo can be found designing something or other, drawing cartoon characters or composing music.

Iyapo is also the host of the Drapetomaniac Podcast, with his co-host Angela Yapa.

He is the author of Paradibm Void and The Redemption of Maxine Allison, and proudly presents: And What of the Cargo?, his first outing into the unpredictable world of suspense/horror.

Iyapo lives happily in the tropics with his beautiful wife and muse, Angela.



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