

Maquillage

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By: Kym Baskyu Vasquez

Tasha walks in her mother's room and quietly observes her makeup routine. Everything is done meticulously. She begins by applying primer with her acrylic fingertips, starting at the center of the face and slowly moving outward. Eye shadow primer is applied to her eyelids. She allows the primer to set, smiles at her daughter, and wakes up her smartphone lying on the vanity dresser. Liquid foundation is blended into the skin until it looks flawless. She grabs her eye shadow and smooths some on each eyelid. The eyeliner outlines the eyes. Then, she picks up the mascara and strokes her lashes. As rose-colored lipstick glides on her lips, Tasha breaks the silence.

"Ma, why do you always put on a mask before we leave the house?"

The mother chuckles and continues putting on her lipstick. "This is not a mask. I'm just using a little makeup to look my best and highlight my features."

"Show off your features? Why can't you look your best without it?"

Tasha's mother looks at herself in the mirror. "Well, I'm not trying to "show off." Just presenting the best version of myself."

"But it's not really you. Isn't that a lie? You said lying is a sin."

"Wearing makeup is not lying, sweets. Everybody knows I have it on." There is a brief pause. "You know, God left pigments and colors on the earth, nothing wrong with using them." The mother brings Tasha closer. "Remember when we bought this house?"

"Yeah."

"It needed a paint job, and we hired people to paint the house. Then, how did it look?"

Meditations: Psalm 39:5-6, Proverbs 22:6, Song of Solomon 4:7, I Samuel 16:7, Proverbs 31:30, Romans 12:2, Genesis 1:31, Isaiah 64:8, Ephesians 2:10, Psalm 139:14, I Peter 3:3-4

Purpose: Parenting, self-reflection, contentment, self-esteem, promote authenticity

Subject matter: Teen, adult, young children

Great for: non-commercial film or theater projects, story time, read at gatherings, conversation starter

“It looked pretty.”

“Well, that’s kinda what I’m doing when I put on makeup.”

“I want to look pretty, too. Can I have some?”

“You are already pretty. You don’t need makeup. Wait till you’re older.”

“Mom, please! please!!”

“Okay, fine. After work, I’ll buy you a little kit you can play with. Now, let me finish getting ready for work.”

Tasha runs out of the room as her feet dance with excitement.

Tasha’s mother arrives home later that night. She collapses on the couch and drops her briefcase and purse. The babysitter comes out of the bathroom as Tasha runs out of her room.

“Hello, Mrs. Thompson. How are you?” The babysitter asks.

“Tired.” She looks towards her daughter. “How was school, sweets?”

“It was great. Did you get my makeup?!”

“Uh, yes, I did.”

She reaches in her leather briefcase, pulls out a plastic bag, and hands it to Tasha, who enthusiastically grabs the bag and runs to her room.

“I’m heading out, Mrs. Thompson. Tasha finished her homework and ate the leftover pasta.” The babysitter says as she exits.

“Thanks so much.”

Tasha’s mother sits in silence for a minute, then heads to her room. She undresses, puts on her house clothes, and sits down on her vanity stool. A branch lightly taps the bedroom window, but Mrs. Thompson doesn’t notice. The mother looks blankly in the mirror for a few moments. She pulls a makeup cleansing cloth from a container and wipes off her makeup inch by inch. She starts with the eyeliner and mascara and continues until her bare face is all that’s left. Then, she heads to her daughter’s room and sits down next to her. Tasha’s playing with her girl’s makeup kit. She looks funny. Her makeup is blotchy, uneven, and, of course, very amateur looking.

“You having fun?” her mother asks.

“Yeah. Do I look pretty, Mom?”

“You look beautiful with or without makeup.”

Tasha looks into the makeup kit mirror and doesn’t seem too pleased.

“I’ll give you some tips tomorrow, but it’s time to take your bath and get ready for bed. Oh, and you can’t wear makeup outside of the house. You can only play with it here. You understand?”

“Yeah. Okay.”

“I’ll be right back.”

Tasha continues playing with her new kit. She smears more lipstick on her lips and puts some on her eyelids, then all over her face, resembling a mask. She smiles. Her mother comes back.

confidence. “No! I bought it with the money in my piggy bank. You said I couldn’t wear makeup outside the house, so I got this. I don’t want people to see my face; the mask is prettier.” Tasha lowers her voice. “You know, you don’t let people see your face without makeup, Mom.”

The mother’s face turns bright red as if the embarrassment slapped her across the face. She looks at the principal, grabs her daughter, and leaves the school.

“Hello. Yes, this is she.” There is a long pause. “What? I don’t understand. Just tell me what she did?” Silence thickens as she waits for a response. “I’ll be right over.”

The mother hangs up, drops her phone in her purse, picks it up, and rushes out of her office. She arrives at the school and heads to the main office.

“I’m here for my daughter, Tasha Thompson.”

The workers in the office give her judgmental looks. The secretary points to the sign in sheet.

“Please sign here. Ms. Gumphrey’s office is over there.”

She signs, proceeds to the office, and sees a child sitting in a chair with a mask on looking forward. The mask has a face of a fair little girl with red lips, dimples, doll eyes, and rosy cheeks.

“Hi, I’m here for Tasha Thompson. Someone called me.”

The assistant principal looks towards Tasha’s mother but doesn’t make eye contact.

“Yes, we felt you should see this. Your daughter here refuses to take off this mask. We’ve asked her several times and she just screams and cries. Maybe you’ll have better luck. We do not allow students to wear masks at school.”

Mrs. Thompson speaks with a firm voice. “Tasha, where did you get that mask? Take it off.”

Tasha slowly turns to her mother and replies with mask-bestowed

“What are you doing? Luckily, it is supposed to come off with water. Come on.”

They go to the bathroom. Tasha takes off her clothes and jumps in the bath. The mother wipes the makeup off inch by inch until Tasha is left with only her bare face. After the bath, the mother tucks her daughter in bed and prays the Lord’s prayer with her.

Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name.

Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread.

And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.

And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.

Tasha’s mother kisses her goodnight and exits.

The next day the babysitter picks up Tasha after school.

“Can we stop at that store you take me to sometimes? I want to see something.” Tasha asks.

“I guess so.”

They arrive at Sal’s Treasures. The place is filled with eccentricities. Tasha walks around and finds what she is looking for. She grabs it and heads to the register, but the babysitter stops her.

“That’s cute, but I don’t have money for that.”

“I have money. I took some from my piggy bank.”

The babysitter looks surprised.

“Oh, okay. Hope you have enough.”

They pay for the item and walk to Tasha’s house. When they arrive, the babysitter punches in her passcode to enter the home.

“You hungry, Tash?”

“Not really.”

“Not even a snack?”

“Naw. I’m gonna go play”

Tasha runs to her room. The babysitter stays in the kitchen to make a sandwich for herself. A few hours later, Tasha’s mom arrives looking tired as usual. She drops her briefcase and purse down. The couch embraces her, offering its comforts.

“Did Tasha eat?”

“She wasn’t hungry.” The babysitter replies as she picks up her backpack. “I’m heading out. I’ll see you tomorrow.”

“Okay.”

The mother gets up and heads to her daughter’s room. Tasha is sitting down on the floor, playing with her dolls.

“Hi, Mom.”

“You’re going to have to eat something.”

“But I’m not hungry.”

“Doesn’t matter, sweets.”

As her mother leaves, Tasha hides what she bought behind a big stuffed animal. Her mother goes to the kitchen. Some thawed chicken breasts and frozen vegetables are placed on the counter. She heads to her room and comes out shortly in her house clothes and an undressed face. She cooks, sets the table, and tells her daughter to join her.

“So how was your day?” her mother asks.

“Good.”

Tasha picks up a piece of chicken with her fork and plays with it before she eats it.

“Did you finish your homework?”

“Yeah.”

Tasha eats some of her vegetables.

“Why are you so quiet?” Her mother asks.

“Just kinda sleepy, Ma.”

“Well, eat your food, and we’ll get ready for bed.”

When they finish eating, Mrs. Thompson cleans up the table and puts the leftovers away. She tucks her child in bed, prays with her, and heads to her room.

The next morning the mother receives a call from her daughter’s school while she is at work.