

FRENEMIES



She texted her ex boyfriend and got ready to seeing him as Shanice for the first time. She could tell immediately he wasn't into her anymore but she followed her orders.

"Listen," she said, after too much small talk had dragged between them, "I know you're confused, but think about what we had. It wasn't just a phase. We talked about buying a house together. We were supposed to get married. Can't you see Courtney was just envious of me?" she continued, leaning forward. "And come on." She rolled her eyes, letting the old bitterness sharpen her voice. "She's such a bore."

"We've already gone through this, Shanice, I thought we were going to have a pleasant chat between friends..."



Shanice was not happy with the way the chat had gone, since after the initial confrontation the two had actually enjoyed their time together.

"For your next meeting," Courtney said, dropping a plastic bag onto the bed, "you'll wear these." Inside were a cheap blonde wig, a small case of green contact lenses. "I want you to be utterly ridiculous. I want him to see how desperate you are. How badly you want to be white. How badly you want to be together with him."

"God, this is going to be humiliating" - Shanice commented.

"After this, he won't accept any more of your invitations" - Courtney continued.



Shanice sat on the sofa, brushing the long platinum hair. "This wig looks so fake on me!"

Courtney stood behind her, arms folded, enjoying the sight. "Haha, you don't say."

Shanice looked up at her. "So, I won't ever see him again? Is that your plan?"

Courtney seemed to sweeten. "Maybe we could arrange a double date at some point..."

"A double date? With whom?"

Courtney looked at her. "With your future boyfriend... You don't want to stay a spinster for your whole life, do you?"

Before heading to the restaurant, Courtney handed her a single red rose. "Hold this. It makes it funnier."

FRENEMIES



Shanice stared at the flower. "I hate you." "I know. Now smile." So she did.

She stood on the sidewalk. People glanced at her as they passed. Some looked quickly away, embarrassed for her. Then he arrived. "Hey babe," she said, forcing brightness into her voice. "I missed you." He stared at her outfit, at the wig, then at her face. "Shanice... Are you crazy?" he asked. "I told you it's over."

"It's fine if you want a white girlfriend now," she went on, the words Courtney had written for her burning in her mouth. "I can be your fantasy blonde girl. Listen, I can sound like a white girl too." His face changed. Not with desire, not even with anger at first, but with a kind of shocked pity that made her wish the pavement would open underneath her. The date did not go well.



Working out in Shanice's body had been strange. Not because it was weak. It wasn't. The body was stronger, actually. Lower, fuller, more grounded.

The leggings hugged her hips and thighs tightly, the way men's eyes followed her even when she was doing something as ordinary as pulling a cable handle down toward her waist reminded her of her newly gained sex appeal. She told herself she hated it.

Shanice's genes and body united with Courtney's ability to stick to a training routine and taste in outfits was making her catch men's attention more than ever, she noticed, feeling conflicted about making her rival's body look so good.

FRENEMIES



One day, after a set, she stepped back, breathing harder than she wanted to admit, and wiped her palms on her leggings. "You've got good form." The voice came from beside her.

Courtney turned and found a young Black man smiling at her, holding a shaker bottle in one hand. He was tall, athletic, with warm eyes and the kind of easy confidence that did not feel forced. For a moment, she regretted wearing one of Shanice's flashy leggings. "Oh," she said. "Thanks." "You train here often?" She almost laughed. The old Courtney would have dismissed him without thinking. But standing there in Shanice's body, she felt confident. "He was actually kind of cute. I think I like Black guys now." - she realized.



By the time the date came, Courtney had changed outfits three times. The old Courtney had known what suited her. Pretty without trying too hard. Now she stood in front of the mirror in Shanice's body, wearing a white halter top that showed more skin than she would have allowed herself a few weeks earlier, and black leather shorts that clung to her hips with an almost rude confidence. Her nails were long and pink. Her makeup was warmer, heavier around the eyes, glossier at the lips.

The outfit worked. Annoyingly, it worked. The white top looked striking against her dark skin, the shorts made her waist seem smaller and her hips fuller, and the whole look had a bright, shameless confidence she had once judged in other girls.



Outside, the afternoon was hot enough that she regretted the leather shorts within five minutes. She waited near the corner. She looked nervous.

A man had looked at her in the gym, liked what he saw, asked for her number, and now he was coming to meet her.

The old Courtney would have laughed at the idea. She would have called it random, maybe even embarrassing. Now her stomach fluttered when she saw him walking toward her. Jamar had cut his hair shorter since the gym. It suited him. He wore a dark fitted T-shirt and jeans.

"Hey," he said, grinning. "Wow. You look good."