

FRENEMIES



They sat on the sofa. The newly Black girl looked mad, her hands clasped together over her new thick thighs.

"Listen, I know you're mad at me," the white girl said. "And I find it so funny... But we don't have to be enemies. We used to be friends, after all."

"You stole my life, Shanice. And forced yours on me. How do you think I feel?"

"Oh, I thought we were past this. You stole my boyfriend, I took it back, now we're even. Also, once and for all, you are Shanice now. The earlier you accept this, the better it is. Everybody will treat you as Shanice, so you better get used to it. Refer to me as Courtney. Got it?" The black girl looked down, swallowing her anger.



"Ok, Courtney."

"Good girl haha" - the white girl giggled.

The words made her clench her jaw, but she said nothing.

"Now, as for Dave..." Courtney continued. "Do you miss him?"

"Yes," Shanice admitted. "A lot."

"You can still see him. Actually, I ask you to. Try to set up dates. Show him you still love him. Just don't mention who you are, or you'll wake up looking like your grandma's best friend. Got it?"

"Ok... I guess. So, no limits?"



"Feel free to hit on him. You can still recapture him as Shanice. You're sexy, don't forget it. Use your charm. Don't feel afraid to be over the top. I mean... Shanice was like that with Dave. Actually, you should strive to be more like that."

"Oh, I see. So, like... sassy?"

"Yeah. You're one sassy young Black lady now, never forget that. I don't want Dave to suspect a thing. We'll stay close for a while, so we can learn from each other and give our bodies time to get the full muscle memory." Courtney paused, studying her with amusement. "I see your facial expressions are already very much those of Shanice!" The Black girl gave her a side-eye, unaware of it.



"Now, practical topics," Courtney said, reaching into her bag. "Here are your new documents. Shanice Brooks is your name now. You have a driver's licence, a credit card with a low credit score, and here are the keys to your apartment."

The Black girl stared at the ID in silence. There she was, smiling from the little plastic card. Shanice Brooks. She was officially her old enemy now. Courtney leaned back, pleased with herself. "I will be living here from now on, of course. We don't want to attract any attention from the neighbors." The Black girl swallowed. Her skin was real. Her voice was real. The ID in her hand was real too. She accepted her new reality with resignation. "Ok," she said quietly.



"Listen, we don't have to be enemies. We used to be friends, after all." - Courtney said, sensing the Black girl's resentment subsiding but still lingering.

Shanice grimaced. "I don't know, I..."

"Are you still fighting this, sweetie?"

"No, I... know even if this defies logic it's pretty much real and I've come to accept it, I think." - she said, looking down at her dark skin "And it makes no sense to fight this at this point. But I'm not sure I'm ready to be your friend."

"Oh come on, we'll get used to this. You'll get used to be Shanice. We'll laugh about this one day."

The Black girl was scratching her head.



"Hey, I missed being close to you," the white girl said, shifting tone, sitting beside Shanice and slipping her arms around her. Her hair looked almost ginger in the light, soft and clean and bright, carrying the faint scent of Courtney's old shampoo. That scent had belonged to her yesterday.

"Whatever..." the Black girl muttered, forcing herself to hug her back.

At first, she kept her body stiff, refusing to give Shanice the satisfaction. But the spell worked in subtle ways. The warmth of the embrace, the shape of Courtney's lithe arms around her, the closeness of a girl who had once been her friend, all of it confused her. Her body remembered affection before her mind could defend itself.



Her dark arm rested against Courtney's pale one. It looked natural. Like two girls who had always been this way: Courtney, the pretty white girlfriend, and Shanice, the hurt Black friend expected to be strong enough to forgive. A girl with attitude, but a good heart. A girl whose boyfriend had been stolen, but who would eventually forgive.

That was the trap. The longer Courtney held her, the harder it became to stay angry. Courtney belonged here now, in the apartment, in the pale skin, in Dave's life. The thought should have disgusted her. Instead, for one weak second, it almost comforted her. Maybe she would not have to fight every reflection, every memory. Maybe life could still be good, in a smaller and more humiliating way, as long as she stopped insisting she was Courtney.



A couple of days later, slowly getting adjusted to their new routines, she handed Shanice a red short dress from her collection, completing the outfit with black stockings.

"This feels kind of cheap," Shanice muttered, lifting the fabric between two fingers. "Where did you even get it?"

"I ordered it from Shein, I think."

Shanice scoffed. "So," she said, forcing a bored tone, "you want me to try and win him back now?"

"I want you to act natural. I know you miss him. Express that. Just don't mention anything I did to you, and I'll be satisfied."