

Stay tuned for the next book in
the DRAMA HIGH series
FRENEMIES.

Until then, satisfy your DRAMA HIGH craving
with the following excerpt from the next
exciting installment.

ENJOY!

Prologue

“Sometimes, the people you think are your friends can be worse than enemies,” my mom says. I can hear her voice, but I can’t see a thing. I feel suspended in time, like I’m in between the dream world and reality.

“Yeab, mom. I feel you.” Did I say that aloud or in my head?

“They pretend to be your friend while all the time, they really want more. They either want to feed off your popularity, talent, cookies, anything you’ve got to give. Whatever they think they can have, they will take.”

This feels too real to be just a dream.

“Remember Jayd, lust takes and love gives. And, I’m not talking about material things. Friends give their true selves to you. Frenemies, on the other hand, pretend to give until you start reciprocating. Then, the giving turns into taking. And those are not friends. Those people are leaches. And, like all leaches, they must be eliminated in order for you to thrive.”

For the second time since falling asleep last night, I sit straight up in my bed, breathing hard and sweating like I just ran a mile. Good thing I shower in the morning. Damn, what was that? It wasn’t really a dream. It was more like a psychic conversation between me and my mom. I wonder if she did that on purpose.

My mom being able to read my mind still really freaks me out. She says she can only get in my head. Now she's sneaking into my dreams. Man, this is getting to be a bit much for a sistah. But, like my mom said, it comes with the territory of being a Williams woman, just like our never-ending drama.

"Jayd, wake up, girl. You're already five minutes late," Mama says without moving from her comfortable position in the bed across from mine. How she knows what time it is without looking, I'll never know. But, I know she's right. I can hear Bryan stirring around in the kitchen, so I know it must be past time for me to get up. As I stumble out my twin sized bed to retrieve my outfit for the day from the back of the bedroom door, I accidentally step on the rhinestone sandals Jeremy bought me; it's sticking out from underneath my bed.

"Remember your mother's words Jayd," Mama says, making me recall the dream I just snapped out of. As if it isn't bad enough that I have Mama in my head, now my mom has crept her way in, too. What the hell?

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Just Friends

*“You, you got what I need/
But you say he’s just a friend.”*

—BIZ MARKIE

After both Rah’s surprise kiss yesterday afternoon and my first dream last night about Jeremy being Tania’s baby-daddy, I’m even more confused about what to do with Rah and Jeremy. I can’t front; Rah’s kiss is still making me tingle and I have to see Jeremy this morning. How can I look Jeremy in the eyes after what I did? Well, technically, what Rah did. But I could have stopped him, if I really wanted to.

“Jayd, get out the bathroom. I need to go, now,” my cousin Jay says, snapping me back into my morning routine. My cornrows are shiny from the mint shea butter Mama and I made last night. Mama supplies most of the beauty products for Netta’s Never Nappy Beauty shop: hair oil, sprays, lotions, soaps, essential oils, you name it. If it can be made, Mama can make it. And, it’ll be ten times better than anything you can buy at the beauty supply store.

“Give me one more minute and then the bathroom’s all yours,” I say, packing up my toiletries into my bath towel before taking one more look in the mirror. My yellow Africa 1 T-shirt goes perfectly with my complexion, making my spirits lift. I love wearing bright colors. They make me feel good, despite whatever shit in my environment may be coming my way.

“I don’t have a minute, girl. Get out, now!” Jay can be such a drama queen sometimes, I swear.

“Go around back and let it out. You a dude,” I say as I continue to primp in the mirror. My uncles and Jay—probably Daddy, too— have all taken a piss out back before either out of necessity or some sort of male bonding thing. It ain’t nothing new to him.

“It ain’t like that Jayd,” Jay says, almost groaning. I guess I better let him in. Man, I miss the semi-privacy of my mom’s house on the weekends. At least I don’t have to share the bathroom with a bunch of men while I’m there. But, it’s only Monday, which means I have a entire week before I get some privacy again.

After returning my bathroom necessities to one of my three garbage bags turned dresser drawers in Daddy’s room, I head to the kitchen to find Bryan eating breakfast and ready to go to work up the street at Miracle Market. He didn’t get in until hella late last night and I’m surprised to see him up and alert, even though his eyes are beet red.

“Hey Jayd,” Bryan says in between mouthfuls of cornflakes. I’m sure it’s his second or third bowl. Early morning munchies can do that to a brotha.

“What’s up? Glad you made it home this morning,” I say, grabbing a banana from the kitchen counter, heading into the dining room to retrieve my backpack and put on my sandals before heading out the door. I pull my sweater off the back of the chair where my purse is sitting and slip it on even though it’s going to be a warm day. It’s October and the weather is finally changing. And I’m sure it’ll be even cooler once I get to Redondo Beach.

“Don’t hate because Mama keeps you on lock down, Blackerella,” he says, thinking his little joke is funny. But, it’s not, and I’m tired of the double-standard around here. If I’m

supposed to be from a long line of powerful women, how come it seems we have so many limitations? Why can't I hang till late like Bryan?

"Whatever," I say, tired of this argument. "I got to go before I miss my bus," I say, opening the heavy door before tackling with the security gate. The wrought-iron has been bent for years, making it hard to open.

"Wait up. I'll walk with you," Bryan says as he steps in front of me to open the gate in one quick motion. "Upper body strength: another perk of being a man." As he steps back into the kitchen to grab his bag, I step outside on the front porch and take in a breath of fresh morning air. I love this time of the morning. Everything feels clean before the dew melts. Bryan slides his black bag over his head, barely missing his dreads.

"When you gone twist your hair up," I ask. He looks like a poodle before it gets its hair cut. And, his hair grows fast.

"As soon as I find somebody I can trust to twist it up for me," he says, nudging me as we walk down the street toward Alondra Boulevard. He's been trying to get me to do his hair for a while now. But, I ain't looking forward to the charity work.

"You know a sistah don't work for free," I say, nudging him back, but harder.

"How you gone make a nigga pay and we blood," he says, looking genuinely hurt.

"How you gone expect something for free and we blood," I say, mimicking his pitch perfectly. Bryan is more like a brother to me and I love him the most out of all my uncles. But, he's cheap, just like my ex KJ. Maybe that's why they can hang. As if he's in my head too, Bryan asks me about the dudes in my life.

"So, how's the White boy? I still can't believe you picked him over KJ," he says, sounding as confused as I feel.

“He’s cool,” I say looking down at my yellow Bebe sandals. The shiny rhinestones shimmer in the morning sun, making me remember what Rah said about dudes buying me things. Between his warning at Homecoming and my mom’s warning in my dream, I’m starting to wonder about Jeremy’s true intentions.

“Alright, what’s wrong,” Bryan says, knowing I’m not telling the whole truth. Damn he’s intuitive for a dude.

“Well, Rah kinda came back into the picture recently,” I say, not wanting to tell him everything that happened. He and Rah used to hang out, but not as much as he and KJ do. Rah was all about spending time with me when he came over, which was pretty much everyday when we were together. It was who he hung with after he left my house that was the problem.

“Rah? What’s that nigga up to? Him and Nigel still hanging tight,” he asks.

“Yeah, Nigel goes to South Bay now,” I say. I still can’t believe it myself. How did my world get so small?

“Fo’ sho’? That’s some good shit right there. Now I won’t be so worried about your ass,” he says, pushing me off the curb as we approach Miracle Market.

“Glad my social life meets with your approval,” I say, a little saltier than necessary. But, this male bonding shit really gets on my nerves sometimes.

“What’s got your panties all up in a bunch,” he says, taking out a spliff and lighting it right in front of the store. Bryan has no fear.

“Without getting too detailed, Rah says he just wants to be friends but I don’t think he’s telling the whole truth,” I say, leaving out the juicy kiss he planted on me.

“He’s probably not, Jayd and you know that. So, what’s the problem?”

“The problem is I just got into a new relationship and there’s already so much drama.”

“Well maybe it’s the universe’s way of telling you to make a different choice.” If street philosophy was a major in college, Bryan would have a PhD. in the shit.

“Oh, here you go. You need to apply for a job as a therapist or something and stop wasting your time working at the Miracle Mart,” I say as I walk away from his cannabis cloud, toward the bus stop on the corner.

“No thanks. I like my life just the way it is,” Bryan says as he takes one last draw before putting it out and back into his bag, ready for work. “Can you say the same thing?”

As the bus pulls up to take me to my first stop in Gardena, I can’t help but think about what Bryan just said. What if all this chaos in my relationship with Jeremy is telling me to make a different choice? Then, what do I do?

After last week’s Homecoming hype, I’m looking forward to a normal day at school. Nellie gets to sport her new crown around campus all day and I’m glad for my girl. With the lunch procession of the Homecoming court taking up all of her time, we probably won’t get to chill too much today. Even though her head’s still in the clouds, I’m glad she’s coming down a little.

I can’t stop thinking about my dream last night. And, from my experiences, they usually come true in one way or another. I wonder if Tania really is pregnant with Jeremy’s child. Wouldn’t that be some shit? Young Middle Eastern girls getting married ain’t really all that surprising around here. But, one of them being pregnant by a White boy would certainly make heads turn, I’m sure. Speaking of which, here’s my White boy now.

“Hey baby,” Jeremy says as he reaches across the passen-

ger's seat, taking my backpack and throwing it into the backseat while I sit down for the short ride up the hill to campus. If South Bay High didn't have so much drama, it wouldn't be such a foul place to come to every day. It's a clear morning and the unobstructed view of the ocean is always refreshing.

"Hey Jeremy," I say as we kiss. I haven't spoken to him since early yesterday afternoon. I stayed up all night with Mama working in the spirit room and didn't get a chance to call him before I went to sleep. All I can think about now is Raheem's lips touching mine. What the hell?

"How was your evening, Lady J," he says, pulling his Mustang away from the bus stop and joining the rest of the caravan rushing to get a good parking space. "I called you but I figured you were tired from work." If he only knew the half of it.

"It was fine. Just hella busy. I had a lot of homework to do last night," I say, leaving out the spirit work part of my evening. I don't think I'll ever be able to share that side of my life with him especially since he doesn't believe in God or anything close to it. If I tell him about my lineage as a Voodoo Queen, he'll probably react like Misty and think I'm trying to cast a spell on him. And to think, the first potion I made was to help keep his ass out of jail.

"I hear you. I'm still making up work from my suspension weeks ago. The teachers up here are relentless." Yes, they are, especially when it comes to homework. You'd think we were in college already.

"*I gotta shake it off. . .*" Mariah sings, announcing a phone call. I have to switch up my ringtone every now and then to suit my mood. The caller ID reveals Rah's name, making me tingle just like I did when he kissed me yesterday. This isn't good.

"Hey, can you drop me off right here," I say as we approach the front gate, still in line behind at least twenty other

fancy cars waiting to get into the crowded parking lot. “I need to get something out of my locker before the bell rings,” I say, only telling half the truth. I just want some space to think for a little while before the day begins.

“Sure thing, Lady J.” God, Jeremy’s so sweet, making me feel even guiltier about Rah. When did I become the bad one? “I’ll catch up with you at break,” he says, leaning over to give me a kiss. His lips are so soft and pleasant. I can’t hurt him. I just can’t.