



Juicy Central

Heppie
Beautiful, popular, extrovert, unmotivated

Blind Trust

Shay Jackson

[chapter]

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Sherise stared down at her textbook. She felt that old, familiar feeling. The feeling you get when you have no idea how to even begin to solve a math problem. If she couldn't solve the first one, how would she solve the other nineteen that were due tomorrow?

So there she sat. Pencil in hand. Scratch paper in front of her. Math book open. But the problems on the page all blurred together into one big mess of numbers, letters, and weird symbols. Sherise hated algebra. *Hated* it. What the hell did letters have to do with math anyway?

Sherise looked across the library table at Tia. Tia didn't seem to have any issues with the problems. She sat there, furiously scribbling with her pencil and solving the problems with ease.

It didn't help matters that Marnyke was in the room, flapping her jaws. Marnyke had the biggest mouth of any girl in school. She talked nonstop. And she usually was talking about herself. Marnyke didn't seem to care that she was sitting in the middle of the library during study hall. She yelled out her story like she was telling it to someone standing right next to a speaker at a concert.

"That's when I knew," Marnyke hollered, "*knew* I had to have him. Any man that can handle himself on the street *and* on the court, he's all mine. For real."

Sherise slammed her pencil down dramatically. Why did Marnyke have to be such a big-mouth all the time? Why

was she always yelling and being so annoying? Tia noticed that Sherise was frustrated.

“Doing okay on those problems?” Tia asked Sherise.

Sherise exhaled. “It’s just hard to focus in here.”

Tia nodded. “You got that right,” she said, glaring over at Marnyke. “Who is she talking about anyway?”

Sherise looked over her shoulder to see if Marnyke was listening. Then she whispered, “I think she’s talking about Darnell.”

Sherise liked Darnell. He lived in the same high-rise apartment complex she did. Sometimes Sherise was jealous of Marnyke. She got to run wild, do whatever she wanted. That’s why she got to hang with Darnell. Darnell got to do whatever he wanted too. Sherise, on the other hand, was on lockdown. Her

stepdad kept her on a tight leash. She never got to do anything cool.

Sherise sighed and looked back at her book. “Did we even go over these kinds of problems in class, Tia? I don’t remember a thing that looked like these. I mean, I get number one. But what about number two? It’s like a foreign language!”

Tia moved her chair closer to Sherise’s to help her. But as she did, the bell rang. The school day was over. “I can help you with these tomorrow if you want,” Tia said. “Or, I bet your sister knows how to do them.”

“Oh, I’m sure she does,” Sherise said sarcastically, packing up her things. “No way I’m askin’ her for help.”

Tia gave Sherise a kind look. “You coming to YC tomorrow?” Tia asked. “Or do you have to work?”

“I’ll be there,” Sherise said, pulling out a compact from her purse. She checked

her makeup quickly in the small mirror. Then she closed the compact. She wasn't very good with numbers. But she was damn good when it came to maintaining her look.

"I work tonight, though," Sherise said. "I gotta roll to catch my bus. I'll holler at you later, Tia."

"*Hasta luego*," Tia said. "See you later."

Sherise walked quickly to a bus stop near the school. She was tired and frustrated. It wasn't so much the algebra. It was her boring life. The last thing she felt like doing was unloading boxes at GG's Clothing. But that's exactly what she was on her way to do. That was her life.

On the bus ride to the Southside Mall, Sherise dug her name tag out of her purse. *Sherise Butler, Receiving Associate*. Then it had the GG's Clothing logo at the bottom. The job wasn't all that great. Just opening boxes and stocking

shelves and clothing racks. But at least her boss, Juanita, was cool. And it was great having her own money. More importantly, the employee discount was great for her wardrobe.

Sherise hopped off the bus at the mall and hustled into GG's. As usual, she punched in her timecard and grabbed a box cutter. She felt pretty sorry for herself. What would her life be like if she could do whatever she wanted? Would she hang out in rough crowds? Go to wild parties and date bad boys?

"Hey, girl," Juanita said, looking at her watch. "Cutting it a little close aren't ya? What, you think I won't fire you?"

Sherise smiled. "What up, Juanita. Where do you want me to start today?"

Juanita led Sherise to a corner of the receiving room. "Why don't you start with these," Juanita said. "They're the most exciting things we got in right now.

First shipment too. Open one up. Let's see what's in there."

Sherise opened the box cutter and cut the tape on one of the boxes. It had a different logo on the outside. "Never seen this brand before," Sherise said, opening up the cardboard folds. Inside was a new line of handbags. Sherise grabbed the top one and held it up. It had an amazing purple and blue houndstooth pattern.

"How much you think these will go for?" Sherise said, eyeing the bag carefully. "You know, retail?"

Juanita stared longingly at the bag too. "Two hundred at least," Juanita estimated.

Sherise put the bag's strap over her shoulder. It was a great bag. "This bag is *hot*," Sherise said. "I love it!"

Juanita grabbed her clipboard. Then she put her pen behind her ear. "You

think you're getting a raise or something? Maybe a fairy godmother sometime soon? If not, you best forget about that bag," Juanita joked.

Sherise smiled and set the handbag down. She finished unpacking five more boxes of them. The handbags really were amazing. Sherise decided she would save up her money and buy one for sure. She wanted to be the first girl at school to carry one. Sherise finished her three-hour shift. She said good-bye to Juanita and hurried to the bus. Sherise wanted to make it home in time for dinner.

She barely made the bus! Sherise had to practically run out in front of the bus to get it to stop. It was better than being late for dinner though. That was probably worse than getting hit by a bus.

On the bus, Sherise found an empty seat and sat down. She gave a loud sigh. What a day. All she wanted to do was go

home and lay on the couch. She put on her headphones and started playing her favorite song. Sherise closed her eyes and listened to it carefully.

Sherise always studied the songs she performed. She was going to sing it in front of a crowd this Friday night! She had to know every nuance, every key change perfectly.

She cranked the volume and moved her head with the rhythm. She was in her own world, getting inside her song. But in the second verse, Sherise got a funny feeling someone was watching her.

“That Robert Johnson?” a voice asked. “I thought no one listened to that old stuff no more.”

Sherise opened her eyes. It was Carlos. He was standing right in front of her. He was holding onto the overhead rail.

Sherise could feel her heart racing as she took off her headphones.