



Causal Factors Of Frenemy On Emily And Stephanie In Jessica Sharzer's A Simple Favor Movie Script

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the frenemy relationship between Emily and Stephanie in *A Simple Favor*. Their friendship is complex, blending admiration, competition, and manipulation. Stephanie looks up to Emily but also struggles with insecurity, while Emily enjoys maintaining control over Stephanie. Using a qualitative method, this research identifies key factors contributing to their frenemy dynamic, including social comparison, insecurity, past betrayals, and cultural expectations. The findings reveal that their relationship is shaped by both emotional dependence and hidden rivalry, leading to an unstable and toxic bond. Finally, the study highlights how friendships can mask deeper conflicts, where trust and betrayal coexist.

Keywords: *Frenemy; friendship; rivalry.*

INTRODUCTION

Literary works serve as a reflection of human experiences, emotions, and relationships. Through stories, readers can explore various aspects of life, from personal struggles to complex social dynamics. According to Wellek and Warren (1949:94), literature is an artistic representation of life that conveys deeper meanings through its characters, themes, and conflicts. One of the most important elements in storytelling is character development, as it allows audiences to engage with the narrative on an emotional level. Characters are crafted with specific roles and functions, shaping the plot and influencing how the story unfolds.

In both literature and film, characters are essential in portraying human interactions, including friendships and rivalries. Eder (2010:17) explains that characters in movies and literary works serve as emotional and psychological representations of real people, making them relatable to audiences. While some characters display strong bonds of friendship, others reveal underlying tensions, leading to complicated relationships such as frenemies. The concept of a frenemy is particularly interesting because it blurs the line between trust and betrayal, making it a compelling theme in storytelling. According to Greene and Faulkner (2005:12), frenemies represents a paradoxical relationship where individuals engage in both cooperative and competitive interactions, creating an emotional conflict between affection and resentment. This duality is what makes frenemies a fascinating subject in literary and cinematic narratives.

Friendship and enmity are two opposing forces that often define human relationships. However, some relationships exist in the gray area between these two extremes—this is where the concept of a frenemy emerges. According to Delaney and Malakhova (2018), a frenemy is someone who appears friendly but harbors hidden rivalry, manipulation, or distrust. Meanwhile, Silver (2010:89) explains that frenemies often engage in “strategic cooperation,” where they maintain a connection for personal gain rather than genuine affection. This dynamic is particularly complex because it involves both positive and negative emotions, creating an unstable and unpredictable relationship. The picture frenemy can be seen in *A Simple Favor* Movie

Jessica Sharzer's *A Simple Favor* (2018) provides a perfect example of a frenemy relationship through its two main characters, Emily and Stephanie. At first glance, they seem like close friends, but beneath the surface, their relationship is built on secrets, competition, and manipulation. Stephanie admires Emily's confidence and sophistication, yet she also feels insecure and constantly compares herself to her. Meanwhile, Emily sees Stephanie as useful but not as an equal friend. Their interactions reveal the complexities of a frenemy relationship, where admiration coexists with rivalry and deception.

Several factors contribute to the formation of a frenemy relationship. Hart (2007) identifies insecurity and competition as key reasons why friendships can turn into rivalries. Goffman (1956) explains that obligations and circumstances sometimes force people to maintain relationships they might not genuinely want. Abrahams (2011) highlights how past conflicts or betrayals create lingering tensions in friendships. Festinger (1954) introduces the idea of social comparison, where individuals constantly evaluate themselves in relation to others, often leading to envy and

resentment. Additionally, Flynn (2012) argues that cultural expectations can pressure people into maintaining relationships for social or personal gain, even if they are not sincere.

As Sharp (2004:112) states, “A frenemy is more dangerous than an enemy because they know your strengths and weaknesses but use them to their advantage.” This statement perfectly encapsulates the dynamic between Emily and Stephanie, where their connection is based on both admiration and hidden competition. By analyzing their relationship in *A Simple Favor*, this study aims to explore the psychological and social factors that contribute to the formation of frenemies, using theories from Delaney and Malakhova (2018) and other scholars to uncover the deeper meaning behind their complex bond. Therefore, this article tries to find the causal factors of frenemy relationships in Jessica Sharzer's *A Simple Favor* Movie Script.

METHODS

In the research method of this study, this article uses descriptive qualitative methods. Qualitative research uses descriptive methods where data will be collected primarily through narrative explanations rather than numerical data (Creswell, 2014). Research findings are presented with quotes from the data collected to support the observations. Qualitative research is concerned with developing explanations of social phenomena, in other words this research aims to help us understand the social world in which we live and why things are the way they are.

As a text study, this article uses the text of the *A Simple Favor* Movie script written by Jessica Sharzer throughout 2017 and finally the *A Simple Favor* movie was released in 2018 with Anna Kendrick and Blake Lively as the main actresses. This script has 65 pages. Because the author of this article focuses on the frenemy relationship of Emily and Stephanie, the author of this article takes data from all information obtained from words, phrases, sentences spoken by the character.

The data for this study was gathered by this article through attentive close reading of books and journals. Bialostosky (2006) asserts that close reading is a type of “productive attentiveness,” which involves engaging deeply into the text to find complex interpretations and meanings. The journal articles are derived from earlier works that apply similarity theory to this investigation. Some information is shaped like a book or novel, which makes it a literary work. This article intends to carry out a number of actions to gather data for this study, including:

1. Reading the movie script generally in order to be able to understand the movie script *A Simple Favor* by Jessica Sharzer.
2. Reading the movie script from the character's perspective.
3. Listing the dialogues of the characters related to Frenemy Theory.
4. Categorizing the data into matters of Frenemy Theory.
5. Identifying the data based on the causal factors of Frenemy.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Findings

The following data listed in the below table are the findings of Causal Factors of Frenemy on Emily and Stephanie in Jessica Sharzer's *A Simple Favor* Movie Script.

| Causal Factors of Frenemy | Quotation | Data | Page | Analysis |
|---------------------------|---|------|------|---|
| Social Comparison | You smell so good. I wish I smelled like you. | 15 | 13 | Stephanie's comment shows social comparison because she is measuring herself against Emily in a way that suggests admiration or insecurity. By saying, “I wish I smelled like you,” she implies that Emily is better in some way. This could reflect low confidence or hidden jealousy. |
| Social Comparison | You're such a nerd. | 17 | 12 | Emily's comment shows social comparison by labeling Stephanie based on her interests. Stephanie admires the classy, old-fashioned lifestyle from <i>Bewitched</i> , but Emily responds by calling her a “nerd.” This could be playful teasing, but it |

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|-------------------------------|---|----|----|---|
| Social Comparison | Don't move. You used me. | 20 | 60 | also highlights a contrast between them. Emily may see herself as more modern or different from Stephanie. Stephanie's anger grows as she realizes the extent of Emily's manipulation and exploitation. |
| Insecurity and Competition | Don't denigrate your good parenting to comfort me for my shitty parenting. | 12 | 10 | Stephanie feels Emily's comment is both a compliment and criticism, which makes her question if she is truly a better mom or just overcompensating. |
| Insecurity and Competition | I'm gonna do my job, you're gonna take some pills. | 16 | 10 | Stephanie admires Emily's confidence, even though the delivery makes her feel small. |
| Past Conflicts or Betrayals | You do not wanna be friends with me. Trust me. | 14 | 11 | Stephanie interprets this as a challenge, believing she can prove her loyalty and connect with Emily. |
| Past Conflicts or Betrayals | You fucked my husband and my insurance plan. | 18 | 61 | Stephanie feels blindsided and realizes the depth of Emily's mistrust and manipulation. |
| Cultural Expectations | You're a good person. True friend. | 19 | 17 | Stephanie feels validated, overlooking Emily's potential manipulation and taking the words at face value. |
| Obligations and Circumstances | Erase it or I'll slap a fucking injunction on your yearbook, do you understand? | 13 | 11 | Stephanie feels confused and humiliated, but she rationalizes Emily's anger as stemming from her highpressure life. |

Table of Data 1. Causal Factors of Stephanie and Emily's Frenemy in Jessica Sharzer's *A Simple Favor* Movie Script

Discussion

The statement is supported by the following quotations:

a. Social Comparison Data 15

"You smell so good. I wish I smelled like you."

From the quotation above, this article studies that Emily's reaction to Stephanie's comment, interpreting it as further proof that Stephanie idolizes her. Emily sees the remark as exaggerated admiration, which reinforces her belief that she holds a position of influence in their friendship. The quotation happens when Stephanie and Emily are talking, Stephanie says that she wants to smell like Emily so that they are the same in taste. This article thinks that Emily might feel flattered, she also uses this moment to maintain a sense of superiority. By seeing Stephanie's words as exaggerated, Emily distances herself emotionally, keeping the balance of power in her favor. This article states that this dynamic highlights Emily's ability to use social comparison to her advantage, reinforcing her confidence while subtly underestimate Stephanie's role. This article analyzes that this event shows a clear example of social comparison, which aligns with Festinger(1954) theory that how individuals evaluate themselves based on comparison

with others. It happens when Stephanie realize that there is difference between her and Emily, comparing herself and decides to make it equals.

This article also studies that Stephanie's comment as a reflection of her insecurities and her desire to copy Emily's sophistication. Stephanie's words show she looks up to Emily, even in small ways, hoping to bridge the gap she feels between them. This article thinks Stephanie's words reveal how much she compares herself to Emily, often feeling like she falls short. Stephanie's admiration come from a wish to share the same qualities she sees in Emily, which creates an uneven dynamic. This article states that this moment highlights Stephanie's habit of putting Emily on a glorify, which adds to the imbalance in their friendship.

Another quotation proof that frenemy happens when Stephanie gives Emily the friendship bracelet, Stephanie talks about her inspiration that she got from watching the TV show. The statement is supported by the following quotation: **Data 17**

“You're such a nerd.”

From the quotation above, this article studies that Emily's comment as a playful way of teasing Stephanie while keeping a sense of distance. By making a light joke, Emily stays casual but also shows a subtle sense of superiority. This article thinks that this teasing allows Emily to maintain control in their dynamic friendship, positioning herself as more relaxed and socially confident compared to Stephanie. The quotation happens when Stephanie gives Emily a friendship bracelet and says that it inspired by bewitched tv show and Stephanie feels that it relates to what she has with Emily right now. Even though the tone seems harmless, this article states that Emily's words still serve to highlight the differences between two of them, keeping Stephanie slightly on the outside. This article analyzes that this event shows a clear example of social comparison, which aligns with Festinger(1954) theory that explains how people judge their own worth and abilities by comparing themselves to others. It happens when Emily responds Stephanie's reasons why she made a friendship bracelet for Emily.

This article also studies that Stephanie might laugh off the comment but still feel a little hurt. While she likely understand it as a joke, it could make her feel less valued in Emily's eyes. This article studies how Stephanie often tries to maintain their friendship by brushing off moments like this, even if Emily makes her feel small. This article thinks that this interaction shows the subtle power imbalance in their friendship. Emily's teasing might seem friendly, but it adds to the ongoing social comparison between two of them, where Stephanie is left feeling slightly less confident.

Another quotation proof that frenemy happens when Sean, Emily's husband, convinces Stephanie to think rationally because Stephanie is carrying a gun, Stephanie can't believe that Sean is lying to her and manipulating her. The statement is supported by the following quotation: **Data 20**

“Don't move. You used me.”

From the quotation above, this article studies that Emily's accusation reflects her need to deflect blame and preserve her sense of superiority. By accusing Stephanie, Emily shifts the focus away from her own actions or vulnerabilities, framing herself as the victim of exploitation. This article thinks that this tactics allows Emily to maintain control in the friendship while justifying her behavior. Emily's accusation demonstrates her attempt to elevate her moral position by framing Stephanie as the one at fault. This moment highlights Emily's use of social comparison which aligns with Festinger(1954) theory as a defense mechanism, positioning herself as morally or emotionally above Stephanie in the dynamic. By doing this, Emily shifts attention away from her own flaws or questionable actions, positioning herself as the victim in the situation.

This article also studies that how this confrontation becomes a turning point. Stephanie's growing anger reveals her realization of the depth of Emily's manipulation and exploitation. While she may have previously excused Emily's actions or rationalized them, this moment forces her to confront the imbalance in their friendship. This article states how this interaction brings main tensions to the surface, exposing the fragility of their connection. It encapsulates the frenemy dynamic, where accusations and blame create cycles of conflict and resentment, leaving both Emily and Stephanie to struggle with feelings of betrayal and self-worth. This article highlights the complexity of their bond, shaped by layers of emotional manipulation and competition.

b. Insecurity and Competition Data 12

“Don't denigrate your good parenting to comfort me for my shitty parenting.”

From the quotation above, this article studies that the interaction between Emily and Stephanie, focusing on how Emily's words reveal her insecurities and competitive nature as a mother. The quotation happens when Stephanie explains what kind of game that she is playing with Nicky and Miles and acting humble then saying that it is nothing compares to what Miles' father usually does. Emily's sarcastic remark as a defense mechanism, allowing her to mask her feelings of lack when comparing herself to Stephanie, who appears to have everything under control. This article

thinks that Emily's sharp and self critical tone shifts attention away from her own weaknesses, redirecting it toward Stephanie's seemingly perfect parenting. This article analyzes that this event shows a clear example of Insecurity and Competition, which aligns with Hart(2007) theory that insecurities often lead individuals to compare themselves with others and respond defensively. Emily feels her insecurity as a mother, as she feels not enough compared to Stephanie's organized and involved parenting. Emily's behavior are both self-critical and competitive, showing her struggle to accept weakness while trying to maintain some sense of control in their dynamic.

This article also studies that Stephanie interprets Emily's comment as a mix of praise and critique. While the remark acknowledges Stephanie's parenting skills, it also plants seeds of doubt, making her wonder if her efforts are genuine or simply a way to overcompensate. This dual interpretation creates a sense of unease for Stephanie, who starts to question how she is feeling. This article states how this moment reflects the complex frenemy dynamic between the two of them.

Another quotation proof that frenemy happens when Stephanie and Emily were at the park with their children, Emily got a call from her boss. The statement is supported by the following quotation: **Data 16**
"I'm gonna do my job, you're gonna take some pills."

From the quotation above, this article studies how Emily's sharp words show her need to take charge during stressful situations. Emily uses strong, direct language to take control, which helps Emily feel in command of what she sees as chaos. The quotation happens when Emily constantly being called by her boss and she acts bold and dictates to her boss because she does not like being ordered around. This article thinks Emily's confidence is her way of hiding her own insecurities. By speaking firmly and taking charge, she avoids showing any vulnerability. This article states that Emily's approach works to keep others, like Stephanie, in a passive role, ensuring that Emily remains the one in control of situations. This article analyzes that this event shows a clear example of insecurity and competition, which aligns with Hart(2007) theory that individuals who feel insecure often mask their vulnerabilities by asserting dominance or competing with others. It happens when Emily says strong and direct comment, reveals her attempt to take control of the moment and appear confident.

This article also studies that Stephanie admires how confident and decisive Emily seems, even though the way Emily speaks makes her feel small. Stephanie likely respects Emily's ability to take charge but can't ignore how the sharp tone makes her feel less important or capable. This article states that this moment highlights the uneven balance between them, with Emily's confidence overshadowing Stephanie's voice. This article studies how interactions like this show the mix of competition and insecurity in their friendship, where one dominates and the other admires while feeling less. This dynamic reflects their complicated bond, where power and admiration constantly shift.

c. Past Conflicts or Betrayals

Another quotation proof that frenemy happens when Stephanie felt guilty for secretly taking Emily's pictures. The statement is supported by the following quotation: **Data 14**
"You do not wanna be friends with me. Trust me."

From the quotation above, this article studies that Emily's statement as a reflection of her awareness of her past betrayals and her fear of forming close connections. Emily distances herself from others to avoid emotional vulnerability, believing it is safer to push people away before others can hurt her. The quotation happens when Stephanie feels guilty about what she did and she thinks that she is not the person Emily would normally befriend. This article thinks this behavior shows how Emily's past experiences shape her actions, making her cautious and guarded. By keeping people at a distance, Emily protects herself, but this also limits her ability to form meaningful relationships. This article states that this moment highlights Emily's struggle with trust and her difficulty in letting others see her true self. This article analyzes that this event shows a clear example of how past conflicts or betrayals influence Emily's behavior, which aligns with Abraham(2011) theory that individuals who have experienced betrayal or emotional harm in the past often struggle to trust others and build close friendships. By warning Stephanie to stay away, Emily shields herself from potential betrayal but also reveals her fear of intimacy and emotional exposure.

This article also studies that Stephanie's reaction reveals a very different perspective. Stephanie sees Emily's words not as a rejection but as a challenge. Stephanie believes she can prove her loyalty and earn Emily's trust, showing that their friendship is worth pursuing. This article states that this shows Stephanie's optimism and determination, even when faced with resistance. On the other hand, this article thinks how this also reveals a power imbalance in their friendship, where Stephanie is more invested in overcoming barriers while Emily remains hesitant. This dynamic adds to the complexity of their frenemy connection, blending with uncertainty.

Another quotation proof that frenemy happens when their problems were heating up at Emily's house, Stephanie felt like asking Emily why she is also angry with her when all Emily wanted is to be Emily's friend. The statement is supported by the following quotation: **Data 18**
"You fucked my husband and my insurance plan."

From the quotation above, this article studies that Emily's direct accusation as a clear expression of betrayal and unresolved conflict. Emily's bluntness reflects her deep feelings of hurt and mistrust. By accusing Stephanie, she

distract responsibility for her emotions, shifting the focus outward instead of addressing her own vulnerabilities. The quotation happens when Emily, Stephanie, and Emily get into an argument and Stephanie keep asking what is wrong with her and why she gets all of this treatment whereas she just wants to be friend with Emily. This article highlights how this moment underline Emily's tendency to use confrontation as a shield, keeping her emotional defense undamaged while expressing her anger. This reaction not only reinforces her mistrust but also demonstrates her struggle to navigate complex interpersonal friendship. This article analyzes that this event shows a clear example of how unresolved past conflicts or betrayals influence Emily's behavior, which aligns with Abrahams(2011) theory. It happens with Emily's difficulty in addressing her own vulnerabilities, as she prefers to project blame rather than confront her feelings of hurt.

This article also studies that Stephanie's shock and emotional impact upon hearing the accusation. Stephanie feels blindsided, as the remark reveals the depth of Emily's mistrust and willingness to manipulate the narrative. This realization forces Stephanie to confront the darker expects of their friendship, including the imbalance of power and underline resentment. This article thinks that this interaction illustrates the fragility of their bond, where past betrayals and unresolved tensions create an unstable foundation. It shows that the frenemy dynamic at its most unstable, with both women wrestling with feelings of loyalty, betrayal, and manipulation, ultimately highlighting the complexities of their conflicted connection.

d. Cultural Expectations

Another quotation proof that frenemy happens when Emily asks Stephanie for help to look after the children while she is away. The statement is supported by the following quotation: **Data 19**

“You're a good person. True friend.”

From the quotation above, this article studies that Emily's compliment as a strategic move to secure Stephanie's loyalty. While her words seem kind and affirming, it means dual purpose. Emily uses this praise to reinforce the bond between them, ensuring Stephanie's continued trust and dedication. The quotation happens when Stephanie agrees to help Emily to take of her son while Emily can not do it, and Emily always can count on Stephanie. At the same time, this article states how Emily maintains an emotional distance by avoiding genuine vulnerability in her compliment. By framing her praise in a way that meets cultural expectations of friendship, Emily manages to appear caring without fully exposing her emotions or intentions. This article analyzes that this event shows a clear example of cultural expectations that shape Emily's behavior, which aligns with Flynn(2012) theory. It happens because instead of offering genuine vulnerability or connection, Emily uses her compliment to stays in control, ensuring the friendship serves her needs without exposing her true feelings.

This article also studies how a compliment provide a sense of validation and emotional reassurance. Stephanie takes the words at face value, feeling seen and appreciated, which strengthens her commitment to the friendship. However, this article points out that this interaction also demonstrates Stephanie's tendency to overlook potential manipulation in her desire to maintain the friendship. This moment reveals the layered dynamics of their connection, where cultural expectations of loyalty and kindness are intertwine with subtle power plays. This article states how this exchange encapsulates the frenemy dynamic, blending moments of genuine connection with control and selfinterest.

e. Obligations and Circumstances

Another quotation proof that frenemy happens when Stephanie secretly takes a picture of Emily for the year book she is making, Emily feels angry that Stephanie took a picture of Emily because of a trauma in her past. The statement is supported by the following quotation: **Data 13**

“Erase it or I'll slap a fucking injunction on your yearbook, do you understand?”

From the quotation above, this article studies that Emily's response reveals her deep mistrust and need to protect her personal boundaries. Emily lashes out because she feels a strong obligation to keep her secrets safe, and she views Stephanie's actions as crossing an important line. The quotation happens when Stephanie takes a secret photo of Emily for the yearbook and Emily is offended and angry with what Stephanie did. This article thinks that Emily's harsh tone shows how much pressure she feels to stay in control, even if it means hurting others in the process. Emily's choice of words reflects her fear of being exposed and her belief that the only way to stop this is by taking extreme measures. This article states that this reaction highlights Emily's difficulty in trusting others, especially when she feels vulnerable. This article analyzes that this event shows a clear example of how obligations and circumstances influence Emily's behavior, which aligns with Goffman (1956) theory that individuals feel obligated to maintain their public image, especially when a person receive a threat to their reputation. Emily's extreme reaction to Stephanie's actions shows her deep fear of being exposed and her urgent need to protect her carefully curated identity.

This article also studies that Stephanie's feelings of confusion and humiliation after Emily's outburst. Stephanie doesn't fully understand why Emily is so angry but tries to rationalize it by assuming it's because of the stress Emily might be under. This article thinks this shows how Stephanie often excuses Emily's behavior, even when it hurts her. Instead of standing up for herself, Stephanie tries to keep the peace, even if it means ignoring her own feelings. This

article states that this moment highlights the uneven power in their friendship, where mistrust and misunderstanding keep them at odds.

CONCLUSION

Emily and Stephanie's relationship in *A Simple Favor* is a mix of admiration, rivalry, and deception. Stephanie sees Emily as confident and sophisticated, but also feels insecure in her presence. Meanwhile, Emily enjoys keeping Stephanie under her influence, using subtle manipulation. Their friendship is shaped by factors like social comparison, insecurity, past betrayals, and societal pressure. Emily keeps her emotions guarded, while Stephanie struggles with trust and self-worth. Finally, their relationship unravels as hidden tensions explode, revealing how a bond built on both admiration and deceit can only lead to betrayal.

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