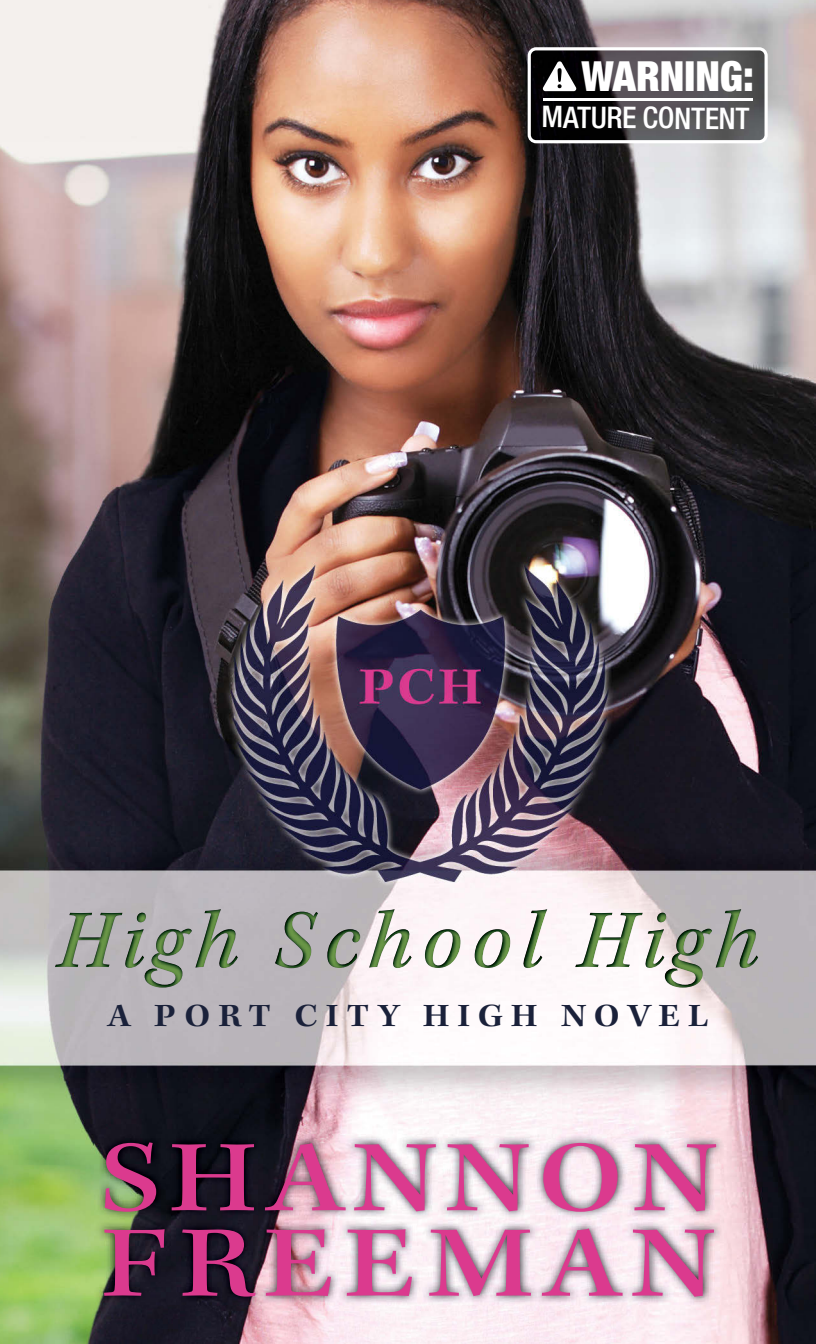

WARNING:
MATURE CONTENT
PCH
High School High
A PORT CITY HIGH NOVEL
SHANNON FREEMAN

Prologue

"Here we are, standing on the threshold of forever," Shane said to her friends as she gazed at the building where they would spend the next four years of their lives.

"Gosh, Shane, you are so dramatic," responded Marisa.

"But that's what you love about me, Mari." Shane smiled.

Marisa, Brandi, and Shane never took their eyes off the ominous building in front of them, Port City High. It was the only high school in the small Texas town of Port City, a place that would not appear

on the map if the oil refineries had not made it their home. It was the first day of school for the three best friends, and they just stood there, soaking in the moment. "Well, ladies, this is it," Brandi announced. The girls couldn't hide their excitement, but they were also pretty nervous. They were on a high school high and loving it.

"Port City High won't know what hit them," Shane said while twirling her pencil. The girls were on top of the world. They had met earlier at Marisa's house to get ready for their big day. They lived blocks apart in a quiet neighborhood, where middle class families enjoyed a simple life. The homes were large and had once belonged to the wealthiest residents of Port City, who had moved on to larger cities when the economy slowed. The former estates made perfect homes for growing families.

Traditionally, the girls would meet up to put the finishing touches on their

school uniforms. Their school colors this year were sky blue, silver, and white, so the girls each chose a color the night before and rocked it with their khakis.

Marisa Maldonado wore a white top to complement her beautiful brown skin. Her hair was dark and curly, but she straightened it when the humid Texas weather got to be too much. Over the summer Marisa had grown very tall, which was perfect for her. She knew many girls who hated being tall, but she wanted to be a model one day so the taller, the better.

Shane Foster wore a sky-blue uniform shirt that fit her perfectly. She loved light colors. Her skin was only a few shades darker than Marisa's, even though Marisa was Hispanic and she was not. One of Shane's parents was white. The other was Black. She had the kind of beauty that allowed her to wear barely any makeup. When she went places, people seemed

drawn to her. They would ask, "Do you know how beautiful you are?" She knew that others found her extremely attractive. She never allowed herself to get a big head, though, which only made her more appealing.

Brandi Haywood was Black and had curves. Many people said that she was the prettiest girl at school. Brandi chose to wear silver to contrast with her dark skin, making it bling like platinum. Brandi's style and walk were her greatest assets. Her head was always held high, and she looked confident in any situation.

The girls each added their own swag to stand out in the masses. In middle school, other girls would try to compete with them but just wound up hating instead. Now they had new land to conquer: high school.

"I guess we should find out where we are supposed to be," announced Brandi

as the three of them strolled to the door. When they entered, they were greeted by Mrs. Monroe.

"OMG! Mrs. Monroe, what are you doing here?" Shane asked. Mrs. Monroe was the girls' favorite English teacher in middle school.

"The district moved me to Port City High. I'm the new speech and journalism teacher. So you have to put up with me for four more years. The ninth graders are meeting in the cafeteria, so follow the green line down the hall. You can't miss it. And, ladies?"

"Yes, Mrs. Monroe?"

"Have a great time at your new school."

"Thank you, Mrs. Monroe," the girls responded.

They followed the green line. When they walked into the cafeteria, it was already packed with ninth graders. "This should be interesting," Shane said.

"Let's just find a seat," Brandi remarked.

The girls located three seats and quickly sat down.

As soon as they were seated, the principal, Mrs. Montgomery, began to address their class. She gave them directions for the day and dismissed them to their homerooms, where they would receive class schedules. The three friends each had a different homeroom. They looked at the numbers on the doors to get a clue as to where to go. Once they had a direction in mind, they wished each other luck and separated down the busy hallway of ninth graders frantically searching for their own homerooms.

CHAPTER 1

Brandi

Brandi was still looking for her homeroom when she heard someone calling her name. She turned around and was greeted by the captain of the cheerleading squad, Alexandria Solis. "Hey, lady! You look lost," Alex said. Alex's dark black hair made her look exotic. She had a look that other girls envied, and she knew how to flaunt it.

"Yeah, well, this school is huge and confusing. What are you doing over here in the ninth-grade wing?" Brandi asked.

"Had to come find my freshman cheerleaders and make sure y'all were taken care of. Have you seen Adrian or Melody anywhere?"

"Nope, you are the first one I've seen from the squad so far. There were so many people in the cafeteria."

"Maybe they found their way already. Let's find out where you have to be."

"Good idea! I am looking for ten-A."

To Brandi's surprise, Alex pointed to the door they were standing in front of and both girls laughed. Alex patted Brandi on the back and said, "Well, I'll see you at practice. Meet us at the girls' gym at 3:45 and don't be late. Now you do know your way to the gym, right?" she asked playfully.

"Ha-ha," Brandi said sarcastically. "Now *that* I can find!" she yelled as Alex disappeared down the hallway.

Brandi was one of the last people in class. *Why am I always so late? Well, it's the perfect opportunity to make an entrance,*

at least that's what Shane always says, she thought. Her mind was racing. *I didn't get to check my teeth. I should have gone to the restroom. Where can I sit? Who should I sit by? Oh, just make a decision, Brandi!* She finally located a chair near the front of the class but not in the front row.

Just as she sat down, she thought about Matthew and wondered how he was doing in high school. Matthew Kincade was Brandi's ex-boyfriend from middle school. She couldn't stand that she was thinking of him after what he had done to her this summer while she was away at cheerleading camp. She had invested so much of herself in their relationship, and he threw it all away. He wasn't even worth her anger. *Boo on you, Matthew*, she thought.

The rest of the day was typical for any first day of school: super boring. The only thing Brandi looked forward to was seeing the other cheerleaders at practice that

afternoon. She may not have known her way around campus, but she could have located the gym with her eyes closed. Two-a-days had kicked her butt for a month before school started. It seemed like all her summer had consisted of was practice, practice, practice, prepare for camp, prepare for the first pep rally, prepare for the first game. She loved every minute of it. It took her mind off of her home life. Brandi's parents had been arguing for forever now, and cheerleading was her escape.

As soon as Brandi entered the gym, she headed straight to the locker room. Once all the girls were done putting on their practice outfits, they started the one-mile run around the school. Brandi was chatting with Christina Hall during their run. She was a sophomore and Brandi's closest friend on the squad. Brandi had been Christina's roommate during cheerleading camp at a time

when Christina could really use a friend. Christina had been shunned by the other cheerleaders for saying that she didn't see what the big fuss was over Alexandria. It was a simple statement, but it didn't sit well with Alex. Brandi had been the only person brave enough to step up and be Christina's roommate. The other girls got mad at Brandi too, but they secretly wished that they could have been strong enough to stand up to the whole squad. By the time school started, the pettiness had been put behind them, but Brandi and Christina's bond was still there. "So, did you see Matthew today?" Christina asked.

"Nah, I'm not sweating Matthew at all this year. I am soooo over him."

"Really?" Christina asked, surprised. "So you didn't talk to him at all? That's wild."

"Not really. That chapter is closed."

There was somebody on the football team that Brandi had been eyeing all

summer. He was extremely fine, but she hadn't told anybody that she was crushing on him. Not even Marisa or Shane knew. She didn't even know his name to tell anybody. Plus, he was a junior. He probably already had a girlfriend. She was sure she didn't stand a chance.

Just as the girls turned the corner by the cafeteria, the football team was heading to the practice field. That's when it happened. She came so close to Crush—as she had labeled him in her head—that she was sure she could smell his cologne. *Oh no, oh no! I can't look directly at him, just keep running!* she told herself.

When Crush passed by her, he gave her a nod and said, "Hey, Brandi."

How did he know my name? she wondered. *Was he talking to me? What just happened?*

With her mind spinning, she tripped over absolutely nothing at all and felt more embarrassed than she had in her entire

life. Some of the other football players saw her and laughed. "You okay, fish?" a couple of them hollered.

"Watch out for the air, it's dangerous," one laughed.

"Girl, are you okay?" Christina asked. "Looks like Brendon has you shook," she said with a laugh.

"Oh, whatever, Chris!" she paused. "What's his name again?"

"Uh-huh, no wonder Matthew's a closed chapter. Looks like a new chapter might be in the works, huh?"

"Girl, I just want to know his name so if he speaks to me again, I can respond. I don't want to be rude and clumsy," she joked.

"Yeah, tell me anything. Just send me an invitation to the wedding," Christina joked as they finished up their run.

Alexandria addressed the girls about the upcoming game on Friday. There were three freshmen on the squad, and this was

new to all of them. As Alexandria began to break down Friday's schedule, Brandi could feel the adrenaline move through her body from the anticipation of cheering at her first high school game.

Then her thoughts drifted to her parents. Would they be there to support her? She didn't think so. They never showed up to any of her middle school activities. Why would high school be any different?



High School High

A PORT CITY HIGH NOVEL

Drama is always just a day away . . .

Port City High is the big leagues to incoming freshmen Brandi, Marisa, and Shane. They are on a high school high and loving it. These girls know how to represent. But Marisa gets caught up with Brandi's ex. Brandi learns that dating a baller is not all that. And Shane balances one addiction with another: a different kind of high.



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