



High School High

A PORT CITY HIGH NOVEL

SHANNON
FREEMAN



HIGH SCHOOL HIGH

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 ’em,” 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 compliment her beautiful brown skin. Her hair was dark and curly, but she straightened it when the humid Texas weather permitted. 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 just snug enough to show how flawlessly she was shaped. She loved light colors. Her skin was only a few shades darker than Marisa's, even though Marisa was Hispanic and she was mixed. Shane 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 African American and had the curves to prove it. Many people said that she was the prettiest chocolate 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. "O-M-G! Mrs. Monroe, what are you doing here?" asked Shane. 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 in 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

*B*randi was still looking for her home-room 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 freshmen cheer girls 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 three forty-five 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 hope I don't have a wedgie ... 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 fairing in high school. Matthew Kincade was Brandi's ex-boyfriend from junior high. 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



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Deported

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DEPORTED

Prologue

*I*t had been an amazing summer—barbeques, swimming, vacations. Who could ask for more? When the flyers were circulated that the first annual Back-to-School Blowout was being thrown by Port City officials, everyone was super-excited. Marisa, Shane, and Brandi had been preparing for two weeks for the Hawaiian-themed party. They ordered the cutest flowered outfits online and made their own grass skirts. They each found leis that complimented their clothes perfectly.

Now they were at Mari's house getting ready for the event.

"I am not ready to see everybody," Brandi announced. It had only been a couple of months since Brandi had been abducted by Steven, a demented childhood friend. In his mind, he thought he was saving her from her family and friends. But he hurt her more than they ever could. She was still trying to heal and move beyond the terror.

"You are going to be fine," Marisa said as her reflection met Brandi's in the tall mirror. "Plus look at all of the support you have. It won't just be me and Shane. Trent and Ashton will be with us too. You know they have your back." They had only met Trent and Ashton last semester. Marisa had fallen in love with Trent, but Trent and Ashton had become like brothers to Brandi. They had helped rescue her from Steven and had remained supportive throughout the summer, taking her to

cheerleading practice and calling to check in.

“Girl, quit trippin’,” Shane said as she came out of the restroom. She had pulled her hair into a bun on top of her head. Her bangs framed her golden sun-kissed face.

“I feel self conscious, like I shouldn’t be showing so much skin. I don’t want to bring attention to myself. I’m going to let the knot out of this shirt,” Brandi decided.

“You will do no such thing,” Shane said. “Show off all that chocolate honey. You look good.” And she did. The contrast of the Hawaiian colors on Brandi’s dark skin made her look like an African queen.

“Argh, I don’t know. I should have gotten the other dress like Mari’s.”

“Girl, I’m about to tie this one in a knot on the side too. I have to show a little leg,” Marisa said.

“That’s more than a little leg. You’re almost six feet tall, woman. That’s a whole lotta leg,” Shane said, laughing.

“That’s why Trent loves me. He needs all this woman by his side. Hey, he’s texting me. They’re outside. Mama, we are leaving!” she yelled.

“*Mi hija*, let me get a picture before you go.”

“Mama, Trent is outside.”

“Well, tell Trent to come inside,” Mrs. Maldonado said. Marisa had really been on her mother about learning to speak English. She had been in classes all summer, and it was finally helping. She was so proud of her.

“He can’t tonight, Mama. We have tickets for the first barge ride, so we have to be on time. Just get us girls. We’ll take pictures for you when we get there.”

“Now you know I’ll get my photography on, Mrs. M,” Shane said.

“Okay, okay, *uno foto*,” Mrs. Maldonado said, snapping their picture. They each gave her a kiss on the cheek and ran to meet Trent and Ashton.

When they got outside, they were shocked. “Is this the Hummer SUT?” Shane asked Trent.

“The girl knows her vehicles,” Ashton said, jumping in the back to let Marisa sit up front with Trent.

“Yes, sir. They don’t even make these anymore. Where did you find this, Trent?” she asked.

“My parents got it for me. I’m leaving for college next year, so it’s an early graduation present.”

“Don’t remind me,” Marisa said, giving him a kiss.

“Oh, get a room already,” Shane said playfully.

“No, those purity rings are stopping any room action,” Ashton said, laughing at his friend. The girls all wore the purity rings that Shane’s sister, Robin, had given them when she found out that she was pregnant. She didn’t want them to make the same mistakes that she had made.

“Heeeey,” Brandi and Shane said simultaneously, punching Ashton in the arm.

“You should be happy you’re with girls who are pure.”

“Yeah, lucky us,” Ashton said sarcastically, getting another punch from the girls. “Ow! Next time, I’m hitting back.”

As they pulled up to the seawall, Trent rolled the top back on the Hummer. They took their place in line with the other juniors and seniors who wanted to flaunt their new vehicles. Everybody had their music blasting. Texas rap could be heard everywhere. Young Dub and anybody else signed with Third Coast Records blared through various sound systems.

“Yo, I’m standing up! Let’s see what’s popping,” Shane said excitedly.

“Trade seats with me, Ashton. I wanna be by my girls.” Ashton and Marisa jumped out of the truck so that the girls could be together in the back.

Standing up in that huge Hummer let them tower over everyone. They could see the whole party from one end of the seawall to the other. The boats and barges had been pulled to the docks and decorated with lights. Each boat had its own party. Some of them even went out for a brief cruise along the port. You could feel the energy of the crowd; it was electric.

Trent and Ashton hung out of the car windows as various girls strolled along the seawall. The girls hollered their names like they were stars. Well, in Port City they were stars. Their basketball skills had earned them some fame. Trent was impressed that Marisa never got jealous when girls threw themselves at him. She was so confident, and that was attractive to him.

“Ooh, I wanna go to that party,” Shane said. “The people are wearing masks and everything.”

“I’ll pass,” Brandi said abruptly.

“Stop being like that, B. Loosen up,” Shane said, nudging her.

“I have to be able to see people’s faces. I’ll always think that everybody is Steven. Never mind, I can tell I can’t make you understand.”

“Hey, don’t worry about Steven. I’ll take care of that fool,” Ashton said, kissing his muscles.

“Seriously, I’m tired of seeing your muscles or lack thereof,” Shane said, teasing him. “Put those little twigs away.”

“Sure you are. Just like I’m tired of looking at your beautiful face,” Ashton said, making Shane blush. He was a hopeless flirt.

They decided to head straight to the food carts along the seawall and load up on barbeque, roasted corn, funnel cakes, and frosty fresh-squeezed lemonade before going to their ship. Their party boat was set to sail in thirty minutes, enough time to eat, drink, and get on the boat.

As soon as they pulled away from the dock, the DJ started to spin Young Dub's newest song, "BALLIN ... But I Don't Play." They went straight to the dance floor and never left for the entire boat ride.

The next boat that they chose was super fun. The theme was murder-mystery. The banner on the side of the boat read "Who dun it?" Brandi solved the mystery in record time and won a backpack full of school supplies.

By two a.m. they had seen all of their friends, the basketball team, and even some of their teachers out having a good time. They called it a night. The traffic was horrible leaving the seawall, but they finally made it out of the tangle of cars and onto the highway. By the time they arrived at Marisa's house, the girls were exhausted and ready for bed.

"Well ... last weekend before we go back to school," Trent said.

"Right," they said, getting out of the car.