



TAKEN

Prologue

Life was just getting back to normal for Brandi, Shane, and Marisa. The long Christmas break was over, and memories were all that remained. What a crazy time! Shane kicked her drug habit again, and Brandi and Marisa mended their friendship that was almost torn apart by Brandi's first love, Matthew.

Before the break, their first semester of high school had not been what they had imagined. Today, as they loaded up in Shane's mom's Tahoe, they were just thankful that they were all still friends.

“Ouch!” Shane said as Brandi jumped into the car. “You looking all Christmas-present cute today,” she said, laughing.

“Stop clowning. You know I bought this jacket when we went shopping. At least during the winter, our coats and scarves can add a little swag to these boring uniforms.”

“I hate uniforms, especially when it’s cold. I can’t even wear my Uggs. They trippin’,” Shane replied.

“Um, ladies, stop complaining. It’s your first day back at school. You both should be thankful that we are all sitting here. This wasn’t an easy winter break for any of us,” Mrs. Foster said as she pulled up in front of Marisa’s house. Mrs. Foster had suffered as much as any of them. Shane’s little drug experiment and her older sister’s pregnancy announcement had been a bit much for the Fosters.

“You’re right, Mom,” Shane replied.

“Did I hear you correctly, Shane? Did you say I was right?”

“There’s a first time for everything, Mrs. Foster,” Brandi teased.

“Shush,” Shane said, reaching over and slugging her in the arm.

“Hey, hey, hey,” Marisa said as she got into the truck. “Y’all too cool for school. Hey, Mrs. Foster! Thanks for picking me up.”

“Did you just get that? It’s adorable,” Shane said, admiring Marisa’s powder blue jacket.

“Mama gave it to me last night. It was love at first sight. Hey, I’m a poet!”

“You’re also a geek, but we love you anyway.” Brandi laughed as she gave Shane a high five.

“Don’t be j,” Marisa said as she laughed along with her friends. “Jealousy doesn’t become you.”

Mrs. Foster pulled up in front of Port City High. “Well, ladies, enjoy yourselves today. Remember, high school is the best time of your life.”

“Mom, you have to stop saying that. Surely life will get better than this,” Shane said dryly. It was hard for her to believe that these were her best days. She had so much more planned for herself.

“Just keep saying good morning, Shane. Just keep saying good morning.”

“Bye, Mom,” Shane said, rolling her eyes. It was probably the thousandth time that she had heard that phrase. A quick exit was necessary when Mrs. Foster started dropping nuggets of wisdom on them.

The girls jumped out of the truck and were greeted by cold winter air that contrasted sharply with the warmth from the heater.

As they walked into the school, they were ushered into the auditorium for a welcome-back program.