

Shantel VanSanten

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Words by Jasmine Perrier

"Thanks for giving me the honor of gracing your cover" Shantel VanSanten starts. The wide public discovered her in 2009, when she joined the cast of *One Tree Hill*. The series was at that time faithfully followed and admired all over the world. Since that breakout role the actress have been pursuing her path and she gained acceptance among the industry of the American small screen. She is currently shooting *Shooter's* season 2. In spite of her busy schedule she managed dedicating some of her time to us. Five years after saying goodbye to the character that considerably changed her life, Shantel never stops growing.

In the industry, she reminds us that everyone's journey is unique. Hers debuted when she was in high school. Meanwhile her heart was attracted by journalism. At that time she was still living in Dallas, TX, where she grew up. She considered the arts as her hobby, before being encouraged and guided by her modeling agency to launch a proper career, a choice that appeared adventurous. "I had always been interested and involved in the arts just never thought of it as a career. It was a big risk to quit college, move out to LA, and take a chance on myself. I could never have imagined this is where my journey would take me. I remember feeling overwhelmed and having so much to learn when I first moved out. I was blessed with having amazing people surrounding me and guiding me through to find a way in this crazy industry."

Still fascinated by the journey she decided to undertake, she counts her blessings each day. Thanks to her hard work and persistence, today she is fulfilled doing a job giving her opportunities to build herself and to be stronger. "My favorite part is being able to transform into different characters and collaborate with other creative people to create incredible stories. To express my interpretation of another human and see the parallels to my own stories as well."

“*One Tree Hill will always be a part of who I am*”

One Tree Hill wasn't her first experience in the acting world, but the one which considerably influenced her career and life. For three years and 57 episodes, Shantel was known as Quinn James. "I couldn't name just one thing I took away. It was a three year life and career altering experience. It will always be a part of who I am as a human and an actress. I take away the friendships, the highs, lows, struggles, successes, each part of it was a part of a whole. I was so grateful to breathe life into Quinn James and loved so many parts of playing her. I still have many of my friendships from that show."

Although the show ended in 2012 after nine seasons, the story of the Tree Hill crew undeniably left its mark on all a generation of fans who still represent a big family very active. That's a phenomenon Shantel may have noticed when she got reunited with some of her former colleagues in Wilmington, the small town in North Carolina that changed forever her perception of life. "I was shocked then and am still now of the fan base. It is another amazing

part of *One Tree Hill*, the following of fans still grows and the loyalty is a beautiful thing. I never felt under the spotlight because it was all before social media really took off and we lived in a small town in North Carolina while shooting. I felt removed from it all, until, I remember the day, I saw fans outside set and I walked to my trailer and then someone on set said I shouldn't be rude and I should say *hi*. I didn't know anyone would want to meet me. I thought they were there for Sophia, James and Bethany. I was in shock and confused why but happily always wanted to go and talk to them after that!"

While she was partnering with Robert Buckley on the show, both actors revealed a powerful chemistry on and off screen. In front of their obvious closeness that today they still show as much, we can only hope to see them playing together again in a near future. "It would be a blast to work with my bestie again. I would want it to be a comedy though. Rob is hands down one of the funniest people I know! He brings out the goof ball in myself."

Even if Shantel let Quinn go and played different roles since, she admits there are things that still exist in her that were Quinn but a part of herself was exposed through Quinn too. "I love exploring different characters now. Once I play a certain character my search is to find things that keep challenging me to grow and expose myself."

Nevertheless the period following the end of the show didn't only generate moments of glory for the actress. Indeed she experienced a hard period full of doubts during which few projects became concrete. "After focusing on the show for 3 years the industry I came back to in LA changed and I needed to find who I was now and my place in it. It was a challenge and took longer than I wanted or expected. I have an incredible family and team of people around me who encouraged me to keep auditioning and believed in me. It's hard to not let the rejection of it all get to you and make you feel like quitting after so many auditions."

“ I need to find who I was now

Telling us that the lows define us more than the highs, Shantel successfully overcame this step of her life. It's more determined than ever that she got introduced in 2015 on CW's star series *The Flash*. As Patty Spivot she charmed the fans of the lightning hero played by Grant Gustin with whom she shared a lot of common scenes.

"As a fan of comics, I was so excited to play a character from the comic books! I loved playing a fun loving, tough, ambitious, strong woman. I remember being on set and getting so excited to see the process of creating show with comic characters. When Grant (Gustin) had The Flash costume on it was hard not to fan girl for a moment!"

If Shantel previously had the opportunity to imitate a superhero in *One Tree Hill's* *Holding Out for a Hero* episode alongside the characters portrayed by Bethany Joy Lenz and Sophia Bush, she doesn't cover up her interest in playing true heroes and villains originate from comics and hopes to coat the suit someday. "I was happy Patty was a normal human in the midst of so many characters with powers. But secretly I wanted a cape, lipstick, and powers of some sort. It's less glamorous when you see how its shot but the special effects added make everyone look bad ass! Aside from The Flash, Jean Grey has always been the character I've loved and dreamed of playing."

“ I am proud of each and every project

Since last year Shantel has been at the head of *Shooter* based on Stephen Hunter's novel *Point of Impact* and Antoine Fuqua's feature film *Shooter* released in 2007. Faithfully involved in her role as Julie Swagger and in this series where action is non-stop, Shantel envisioned this opportunity as a new challenge to face for her personal and professional growth. "It was a

new challenge to play a woman who was so much more than a wife and a mother. It was also a challenge to be on a show with a lot of physicality and action. This is a show I really love and believe in. From the creator, writers, cast, crew and everyone involved we all rally behind this show. Collaborating with passionate and creative people is what I love most!"

Through the suspense and twists including fights and emotion, the first episodes of the show caught the public's attention. Consequently last December the channel USA Network promised John Hlavin's production a second season. "I think the content is interesting, compelling and smart. We have so much content today available to watch I can't say their isn't anything similar out there but I think what we are doing is pretty awesome. Season 2 will be a whole new story and really not disappoint. I cant say much more other than I have been shocked and surprised and can't put the scripts down! It's the same characters from season 1 but we learn a lot more about them as events unfold again this season! You can expect lots more action!"

She is aware that in the industry nothing must be taken for granted. Shantel appreciates all the way she came through. In the future she plans to stay open to whatever this career takes her and she remains guided by her personal mantra "Surrender, Trust, Accept" that encourages her to work hard and then to let it all go. "I am proud of each and every project they are all a part of the journey and I wouldn't be the same without each experience. *Shooter* is the one I am invested in whole heartedly right now and I proudly want the world to fall in love with so we can keep making this incredible show! I also want to explore doing theatre again and doing some movies as well. Outside of work I love to travel

and explore this wonderful world, open my eyes to other cultures, people, food, adventures and experiences!"

Moreover Shantel is convinced that anyone who has a public platform should use it in a positive way to influence and educate anyone listening. Therefore she became a strong ambassador for Lung Force, a national movement led by the American Lung Association. Being a part of the fight against lung cancer was a way for her to pay tribute to her missing grandmother. "As long as I breathe I hope" she constantly repeats herself. "My grandmother and I always said this when she was battling cancer and I feel it in every heart beat as I fight on for a cure! For me, cancer is an unfortunate common denominator affecting everyone no matter the race, sex, religion, country, job... My grandmother's passing allowed me an opportunity to let her spirit live on through my words and actions with Lung Force. It's about giving back, letting people know the facts I didn't know like how lung cancer is the #1 cancer killer and many causes are not linked to smoking, and fighting for those who no longer can! We can use our voices for change and to make a difference, all of us!"

The final say

"I would like to remind anyone reading this you are a powerful source for change and this world needs your unique talents so allow yourself to shine just the way you are... perfectly human! All my love."