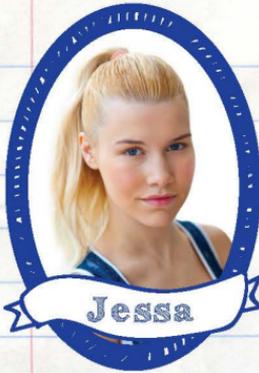




The Most Beautiful Bully

Book 1

Shannon Freeman



Jessa



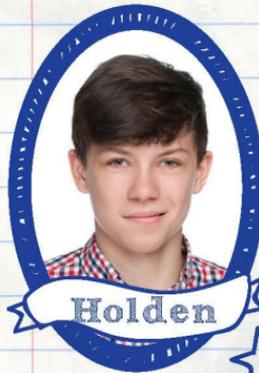
Mai



Emma



Carson



Holden



Jody



Finn



Chapter 1

The First of Many

It was a cool fall day in Texsun City on the Texas Gulf Coast. Carson Roberts shivered as she ran from the warmth of home to the cold of her mom's beat-up old Honda Accord. A car that had been around for as long as she could remember.

Carson was starting a new school today: Summit Middle School.

"It's a great opportunity," her mother said. "You will love it."

“It’s really an honor,” her mother said.

“You’re too smart for your other school,” her mother said.

Her mother said many things. Everything except what Carson was supposed to do after transferring midstream.

She had to leave behind all of her friends to go to Summit. The school was across town and catered to Texsun City’s brightest students. They were the ones who “showed great promise” as others in the community liked to say.

This was the first year that Summit would bus students in from urban schools, allowing disadvantaged kids to benefit from a program that had been designed for the community’s elite. Carson would soon ride the bus too. But her mother opted to drive her there for the first few days.

The school was located near the coast. That’s where the town’s wealthiest lived.

Anyone else interested in a superior education had to apply, then be accepted. The school looked at everything: state exams, grades, and personality.

Mothers could be heard in grocery stores, bragging that their child had been accepted. Carson's name was not on the original list of students admitted. She was waitlisted. But her mother didn't stop until her daughter was in: one of Summit's fifty new sixth, seventh, and eighth graders.

"You're in, Carson! A seventh-grade spot opened up. Someone dropped out. Better a few weeks late than never," she said as she held her daughter's acceptance letter in her hand.

Carson knew that her mother had worked hard to get her in. But it didn't make it any easier. "I'm going to miss my friends," she complained. She knew that her mother would never understand.

"Jody will be right here when you get

home. She lives across the street. You hit a wall at Carver Middle School. Mama wants more for you.”

Carson rolled her eyes. She knew that her mother was right. But it didn't make it any easier.

As their car turned a corner, she could see the sign:

Summit Middle School
Striving for Excellence

It grew bigger and bigger as they approached her new school. It wasn't like Carver at all. It was a newly built school, home to around three hundred middle school students. Summit had a reputation. The kids were privileged and snobby. That's all Carson knew and all she wanted to know.

“I don't want to get out,” she protested, watching groups of students laugh and joke

as they entered the school. Friendships had already been made. Cliques had already formed.

Her mom let out a big sigh and turned to her. Grabbing her daughter's hands, she gently kissed them both. "I love you, baby. Does Mama ever guide you down the wrong path?"

Carson shook her head as her eyes studied the cracked leather of the passenger seat.

"Exactly. Now look at me. This is a good thing for you. There's a price to pay for what you want in life."

"I don't want to go to school with preppy rich kids, Mom. I was fine at Carver Middle. Just let me go back."

"No, I can't ... *we* can't do that. Move forward. You'll be fine."

Carson looked out the window as the sea of middle schoolers filed into the redbrick building. No graffiti had ever covered these

walls. She was sure it never would. She knew her mother was right. But it wouldn't be like her if she didn't first put up a fight.

Carson got out of the car, clutching her new schedule tightly, as if it were her mother's hand. She walked down the long path toward the doors. When she entered the building, it was like entering a foreign world. There was so much school pride displayed in the front hall you would think these people bled black and gold. It was very Disney Channel. She was light years away from Carver, and she knew it.

Just as she rounded the corner, she ran smack dab into someone—a very annoyed someone.

“Ew! Watch where you are going!” screamed a girl who would have been pretty if her face didn't look as though she had swallowed two-day-old sushi.

“I'm so sorry. I'm just—”

“You're just what? Who even cares?”

She tossed her blonde ponytail, smacking Carson in the face with its strawberry-shampoo scent. And *that* was the first person Carson encountered at Summit. She took a slow, deep breath.

Just like I thought, total snots, she thought as she continued on her quest to locate her first class.

“Excuse me,” she said to a man with a bullhorn. He was telling everyone to keep moving and get to first period.

“Get to class!” he yelled, making her wince at the loudness of his voice as it vibrated through the bullhorn.

“But ... but ...” Carson stammered.

He looked at her as if she had fallen off the stupid truck. Carson thrust her schedule into his hands. She was unable to get her thoughts together. So much was happening at once. “Where do I go?” she finally said.

“Is this your first day?” he asked,

confused. He looked down at her schedule. It wasn't often that students started later in the school year. "I'm Vice Principal Briggs. Come with me. I'll show you to your first class," he said, changing his tone.

She had not been far away. She was still a bit jittery as she entered the classroom. Carson didn't look at the other students' faces as Mr. Briggs introduced her to the teacher.

"This is Carson Roberts," he said to the white-haired English teacher already working diligently with groups of students. She welcomed Carson and assigned her to the smallest group.

"You need to get Carson caught up on what's going on. Make her feel welcomed." The teacher nodded at the group of students and smiled.

Carson looked at the kids in her group. They were diverse, to say the least. Something she wasn't used to at her other school. There

were only five white students at Carver. But this group consisted of three white kids, one Asian girl, and her. What was cool was that everyone was working together to make the project a success. At Carver she would have been the only one working. Carson would have been up all night trying to pull it off.

She took her seat. The kids explained the plot of *Where the Red Fern Grows*. They caught her up on their project.

When the bell rang, she checked out a copy of the novel to catch up on the reading. She was starting out behind. It was always harder to catch up than to keep up. She knew she would have to work twice as hard to get up to speed.

“Hey, if you need any help on anything, I’m always just a text away,” the red-haired girl from her group told her. She handed Carson a sheet of paper with her cell phone number on it.

“Thanks. Emma, right?” She searched her brain to make sure she had said the right name. “I appreciate that.”

She already had one new friend. Well, she wasn't a friend-friend. But at this point, even a familiar face would do. She was very different from her bestie back in her neighborhood. But at least Emma was nice. Maybe Summit Middle School wasn't going to be so bad after all.

SUMMIT MIDDLE SCHOOL



The Most Beautiful Bully
Book 1
Shannon Freeman

ISBN: 978-1-68021-006-4



Silentious
Book 2
Shannon Freeman

ISBN: 978-1-68021-007-1



The Alternative
Book 3
Shannon Freeman

ISBN: 978-1-68021-008-8

Middle school is the perfect storm of BFFs, frenemies, and mean girls. If you haven't been frozen out, dumped, or betrayed, then you are lucky. Handling drama is never fun, especially when you're alone. But some bonds of friendship are forever. The Summit Middle School series tackles the challenging years before high school.

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SUMMIT MIDDLE SCHOOL



Handling drama by yourself is never fun. New seventh grade student Carson Roberts learns the hard way not to cross the school bully, beautiful Jessa McCain. And it's only her first day! She's also made two friends in quiet Emma Swanson and shy Mai Pham. But if there's one thing Carson learns, it's that baggage follows you.

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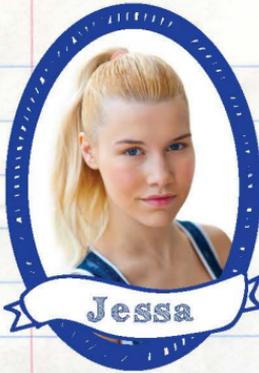
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Book 2

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Jessa



Carson



Emma



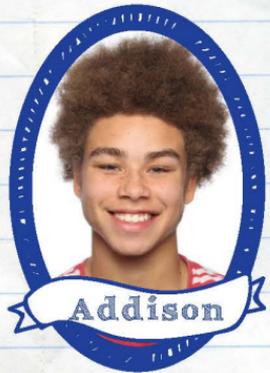
Mai



Holden



Elise



Addison



Chapter 1

A New Beginning

It was a cold, crisp day in Texsun City. Mai Pham sat in her room, listening to the crashing waves at the nearby beach. She was excited. More than excited. She was elated. She'd never felt this way before.

After Christmas break there was usually nothing to look forward to. Just the monotony of school. The kids at Summit Middle School were always so excited when they returned after the holidays. Mai thought about the

delight in their voices as they caught up with friends and bragged about their gifts and vacations.

But Mai's life wasn't set up that way. Her family didn't even celebrate Christmas. Friends were minimal.

This year was different, though. In the fall a new student transferred to school: Carson Roberts. Mai knew she had found a kindred spirit. Quiet Emma Swanson felt the same way. Neither fit in with the popular cliques. But the three girls had created an unbreakable bond.

This semester Mai was happy to return to school. She was ready to see her new friends. They made her feel free, even though her parents, especially her father, kept her on a short leash.

Mr. Pham ran a tight ship. She dared not cross him. The first time she had ever disobeyed him was because of Carson. When

the girls' PE lockers were broken into in the fall, her father ordered Mai to never hang out with Carson again.

But Mai went straight to her mother that very day, barging into her master suite. Her mom was in her enormous closet, choosing an outfit for a church meeting. You really couldn't call it a closet. It was more like another bedroom. It was that impressive. There were at least one hundred pairs of designer shoes, glass cabinets for her handbags, and a jewelry island in the center of it all. There was even a comfortable sitting area.

"Mom, Father is being unreasonable. You know I'm not to blame for my clothes being stolen. I did nothing wrong!" Mai had said.

"Calm down, Mai. I've already spoken with your father. Everything will be just fine," her mother had said. "I'll handle him."

"You didn't have my back at school. You never stood up for me."

“That wasn’t the time. I needed the facts. I like Carson. Just don’t let your father know that you two are still friends until I can win him over.”

Mrs. Pham winked at her daughter. Mai threw herself at her mom and gave her a tight hug.

“Thank you, Mom!” she’d said excitedly.

To this day she had not received word that her new friendship was okay. So she kept her mouth shut. The last thing she wanted was for her father to find out. He was not to be disobeyed. But Carson and Emma were all she had. She wasn’t going to give them up.

As Mai went downstairs for breakfast, she could hear her little sister talking. Lan was two years younger, but they looked a lot alike. With their heart-shaped faces, dark eyes, and silky black hair, they were striking.

The Pham girls clung to each other. There weren’t any school events that they were

allowed to attend: no socials, no carnivals, and no fundraisers. Their father was strict. If it wasn't an event with their church, they were not allowed to go. That meant many nights at home and many nights together.

The girls would fantasize about what life would be like if they were able to make their own decisions. They couldn't wait to turn eighteen. They both agreed they would go to the same college. They would always be there for each other, no matter what. High school graduation was many years away. So for now, they just had to deal with their father's rules.

Mai studied the massive school hallway as she headed to her locker. She searched for her friends but couldn't find them. She was disappointed. She was looking forward to the moment when they would reunite.

She was about to give up. Go to class.

Then she saw a mane of curly red hair coming her way. Emma. It couldn't be anyone else. Emma's face lit up when she spotted her friend. Carson was at Emma's side, waving like crazy. Mai smiled.

“There's Mai!” Emma yelled.

They were an unlikely trio. But maybe that's why they clicked. Mai, with her exotic features and long black hair. Carson, with her natural hair, twisting and turning into a regal African updo. And Emma, with a mass of dancing curls framing her face. They were very different. But they were drawn together by the knowledge that they were meant to be best friends.

Carson and Emma wore their feelings out in the open. First they hugged Mai. Then they blew air kisses. For Mai this was a first. Emotions were not meant for public display according to her father. His face was always unreadable. In public or private.

No way would Mai ever give up her girls. This was the first time a classmate had missed her. The first time anybody searched for her after a long break. And the first time she felt like she was actually a part of Summit Middle School. She needed it. Like air. She truly needed their love and friendship.

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Mai Pham cannot wait to return to Summit Middle School after the holiday break. School was a lonely place before Carson showed up. But now Carson has gone too far. Sing in the school's talent show? No way will Mai's father ever let her compete.