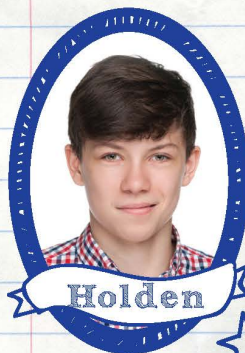
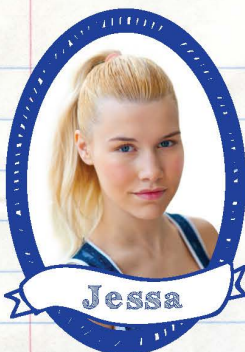




The Most Beautiful Bully

Book 1

Shannon Freeman





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



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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.

