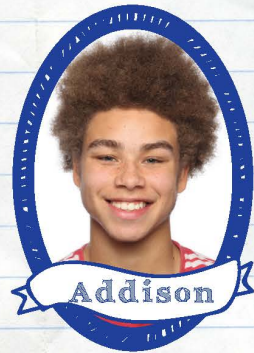
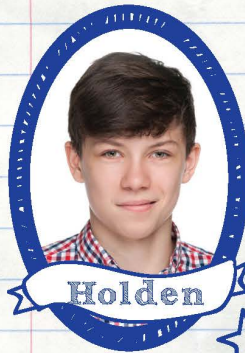
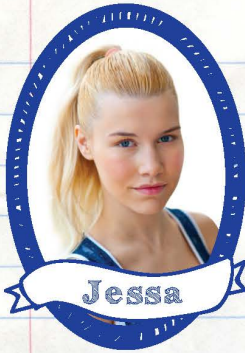




Silentious

Book 2

Shannon Freeman





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.

SUMMIT MIDDLE SCHOOL



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Book 1
Shannon Freeman

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Book 2
Shannon Freeman

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SUMMIT MIDDLE SCHOOL



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.