



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